

Love Bites

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Love Bites

by [yourhonor](#)

Summary

As a vampire, Dream had always looked forward to the day he would finally hunt down and taste human blood. But when a stubborn and secretive human named George subverts his expectations at a masquerade party, he starts to think that maybe he's the prey.

THIS STORY WAS CO-WRITTEN BY @Vanilluvcoffee ON WATTPAD! Check her out here! <https://www.wattpad.com/user/VanilluvCoffee>

As always, if any content creators state they are uncomfortable with fan works like this, I'll take down this story. If you don't like, don't read :)

Notes

Here's a longer project I'm excited about :] we'll try to update this regularly since a few chapters are already written! this story is being crossposted on wattpad by Vanilluvcoffee, the other author of this story !!

please note: technoblade is a character in this fic and some events could be upsetting in light of recent events. please be mindful of that and know that this was written some time ago <3 rest in power, technoblade

Warnings for chapter 1: blood, alcohol, mild homophobia, swearing, burn injury

enjoy :D

Invisible Stakes

There were so many humans to choose from.

The night rolls in over Anderridge, bringing with it the pleasant absence of the sunlight. From the rooftop, Dream could see the mass of people in the town square blanketed in navy darkness, the only sounds in the heavy air was the fading melody from a gramophone, nightly chatter and distant rustling of leaves of the surrounding forest.

He runs his tongue over his fangs, taking in the nearing scent of distant human blood. His fingers twitch with anticipation.

Dream stood crouching behind a chimney, the worn brick rough under his fingertips. Even from this far, he could smell it. The promise of human blood, something he had been waiting to pursue for his entire life. It was finally the night he would take it. The simple thought of sinking his teeth into any one of the mortals in the town below made his pulse flare and stomach twist eagerly.

A warm breeze flicks a blond strand over his right eye, and he haphazardly brushes it back. He takes an opportunity to glance down at his attire once more, and decides to button up his burgundy undershirt completely. His stolen vest and dress pants all were shades of brown and red with golden buttons, it would easily make him appear wealthy. Presentable, attractive. He'd have no problem luring someone, everything was perfect.

It was too bad he wouldn't be able to show his face, people would be able to tell too quickly by his teeth what his intentions were at the town square party. But that's why this party was just what he needed - a masquerade party.

While the silly, lopsided smiley face on a plastic white circle looked ridiculous, it was the best he could manage. It was friendly looking enough for people to fall for it. He wouldn't need too much time to fully convince someone to trust him, anyways. He'd practiced, over and over, predicting what they would say, how he would respond and get into their head, convincing them that he had their best interest in mind. By the time anyone would realize his plans, the blood will already be spilled.

Dream leans over the edge of the roof, thankful that he was too high up for anyone to see him. It was a good vantage point, especially for picking his prey.

So, which one did he want?

His eyes scan the area, searching for a gullible someone that would be vulnerable to his charm.

Most that came to the weekly night gathering were young adults, healthy and bodies rich with the best tasting blood, so he had heard.

A dark haired boy walks into a group of what Dream presumed were his friends - too risky. Friends meant witnesses.

Dream turns his attention to a classily dressed blonde, her hair reached halfway down her back and draped over the sides of her neck - too difficult to bite.

As a gathering of people part, one brunet behind them stands out to Dream in particular, seated at a bar by his lonesome. He's dressed in a deep blue victorian coat. Short but fluffy hair, smooth pale skin. Promising. He seems to be contemplating what to order, drumming his delicate fingers on the bar table.

Dream considers to continue looking, but his eyes remain on the brunet. He keeps looking, longer. His neck was exposed above his navy blue coat collar, vulnerable, he looked to have a smaller stature, easier to avoid struggle. It would be fast, easy.

Not to mention, the guy happened to be kind of cute. Just a bonus.

Dream stands. He'd be the one.

Dream clears his throat and approaches through the clumps of people, right hand in his coat pocket.

"Hey, baby." Dream says, voice low and slightly raspy. The brunette whips around and faces him, expression confused and face delicately flushed. Now *that* was a reaction. A simple black and white mask rests on the upper half of this man's face outlining his eyes, which were a brilliant deep brown.

He leans an arm back onto the bar counter, probably due to how Dream practically towers over him

like this. His gaze narrows when he sees the blank smile.

“Um.. hello.” He says. Dream takes note of his accent.

He wonders how his screams would sound.

Dream sits down on the leather-cushioned bar stool next to the human, crossing one leg over the other.

“Don’t be timid darling, I don’t bite. What’re you having?” His hand gestures to the line of various drinks.

The guy was obviously suspicious. He eyed Dream skeptically. “Why does it concern you?”

“Aww, come on,” Dream leans an elbow over the counter. “Humor me.”

He’s hesitant, but gives an answer. “I normally have sparkling champagne...but I don’t think I’ll be having any tonight.”

Dream challenges him by leaning closer. “The cheap stuff?” He scoffs. “Yeah, you’re not having that. Excuse me! I’ll have a glass of your Chateau Margaux. Top of the barrel.”

The bartender nods, eyes lighting up at the pricey request. Dream returns his attention to the mortal stranger.

The response he gets is unexpectedly accusatory. “Okay, what are you getting at?”

Dream smiles with amusement under the mask, and innocently tilts his head down to look at his nails. “Nothing, am I not allowed to be generous?”

The others’ eyes run up and down Dream’s figure critically. “I haven’t seen you around.”

“I’m new here.”

“No wonder, I definitely would have noticed you.”

Brown eyes bore into the expressionless face as the bartender sets an intricate wine glass between them with a click.

“Why’s that?”

Both hands land on the glass at the same time, larger hand over smaller. Dream notices how soft his skin feels under his hold.

The other furrows his brows. “You’re...noticeable.” Dream closes his fingers more tightly around

the delicate hand coyly, but it seems to not affect the other's demeanor. "I definitely would have known of you by now."

They both pull on the glass, and the liquid inside sways as it halts between them. Dream rubs a finger over George's knuckles.

"Do you want to know me? I thought the point of these parties was to be mysterious."

"I'm not that big on rule following. What's your name?" The human asks.

"Dream." He says simply. "Not the most conventional name, I know."

The man in question gives a pseudo-smile. "George."

"George." Dream repeats, trying the name on his tongue.

George pulls the cup from Dream's hand and takes a sip through a mischievous smile.

What a brat.

"Nice tie you got." Dream tries.

"Thanks." George accepts, and sets down the glass to look up. "Nice...hair."

Dream runs a slow hand through the shallow bangs that fell over his mask's edge. "Huh, that's a sweet thing to say."

George huffs. "Sweet isn't the word I'd use."

"Maybe." Dream's hand wanders to the hem of George's coat to feel the fabric, and even dares to linger a thumb against George's waist. "But I think it suits you."

George's breathing shallows for a moment, and he looks behind their barstools to spot a couple of onlookers. "You really shouldn't do things like that." His voice turns to a mutter as he pushes Dream's hand gently away. "It's not funny."

As he is about to reply with another flirty line, Dream stops himself when he sees the twinge of genuine sorrow clouding the human's eyes.

That's inconvenient. He needed to gain trust if this was going to work - he has to change course a bit.

"Sorry, I guess things like that aren't taken to very well here." He casually adjusts the top button of

his burgundy undershirt. “But hey, at least you got some expensive wine out of it.”

Thankfully, it earns a breathy chuckle.

“Guess I did. Even though you have no reasonable excuse for getting me this.”

“My *excuse* is wanting to make new friends. The least you can do is give me a chance.”

George smiles quizzically. “Why me, though?”

“You’re...” *Biteable*. “You look interesting, unlike all these other idiots.”

“*Inch* resting, you say...” He smiles wider, dimples showing.

Dream chuckles, but genuinely this time. “*Inch* resting... your accent is funny.”

George rolls his eyes and takes another sip. His lips press together to suppress a smile.

They sit in silence for a moment, and simply listen to the orchestral symphony as another song fades to an end.

“Thanks for the wine.” George says eventually, filling the silence in the air.

“Of course.” Dream says.

The next song begins. Dream taps his foot nervously, following the beat of the music. He inhales deeply. *Time to move things along* .

“May I have this dance?” Dream asks formally, offering a hand to his human companion.

George eyes the hand for an agonizingly long amount of time, but his charm seems to pay off when George says “I’m not a great dancer...but if you insist.”

George takes Dream’s hand. It’s cold against his own, the size difference in their hands much more prevalent now that they’re pressed against one another.

Dream pulls the shorter against him and slips a hand around his waist, against the small of his back. He intertwines their fingers and holds their arms out to the side, George placing his hand on Dream’s shoulder. George giggles nervously at the closeness. They begin to sway to the rhythm of the music.

The classical music is elegant, filling the night air from the mouth of an old nearby gramophone. It surrounds the odd pair in what feels like their own bubble.

Dream notices their height difference, looking down at George. The brunette looks up, but once he notices Dream is actually looking at him behind the lopsided smile, he looks away bashfully.

“You look beautiful, George.” He says quietly. The words catch them both a little off guard.

George is unsure what to say. His face reddens as his hand holds Dream’s hand tighter. “Thank you.. You also look nice..”

Dream lets slip a wheezy laugh. It’s highly contagious, George finds, since he laughs too.

“You think so?” He tsks. “You don’t have to say that. Besides, you can’t even see me.” Dream says.

“I don’t have to...it feels right.” George says. It’s so quiet, Dream isn’t even sure he heard it correctly.

It’s silent for a moment before George speaks again. “Who are you?”

Dream moves a hand to hold George’s waist. “Does it matter?”

The edges of George’s face are warmly lit by a nearby lantern as he looks up again. “ *I* feel like it should.”

“And *I* feel like you shouldn’t think about it too much. Just focus on me, alright?”

George rolls his eyes and scoffs, a charmed smile spreading on his lips. “You’re weird.” Dream chuckles in response. He’d give credit where it’s due- this guy was kind of entertaining.

George presses forward and rests his head on Dream’s chest. From the new position, Dream can see the back of his pale neck. He takes a deep breath, an attempt to control his desire to bite.

They continue to sway tenderly. Eagerness makes Dream’s heart thump louder, his mind runs rampant with possibilities of how he would take George’s blood, how he could wipe the smugness off of his face in an instant, how good it would feel to tear into his skin.

Not yet. Just wait.

A song with a deep cello chorus begins. George sighs and lazily moves his head to look into Dream’s eyes with a look so shockingly vulnerable that Dream could barely resist tackling him to the ground right then.

“If you’re going to hurt me, just get it over with.” His voice dropped to a dreadfully quiet tone.

Dream's breath hitches. *How did he-?*

"That's always what happens," he continues. "Whatever you want to do to me, just do it now. You don't have to trick me for it."

Dream is speechless. Did he know somehow?

Play it cool. You still have a chance.

"What? Why would I want to do that?"

"I'm serious."

"And...so am I." Dream moves a hand to cup George's cheek, tenderly caressing it. George doesn't lean away, but doesn't lean into it either. "I don't mean to scare you." The tired expression on George's face makes Dream's blood run cold. He gulped, and attempted to maintain his demeanor. Fuck. "I'm sorry for anyone who has."

Though clearly doubtful, George offers a weak smile. It makes Dream want to get away from this as fast as possible. Bad. Bad bad bad bad bad, this was *bad*. It wasn't supposed to be like this.

"I don't care anymore. I suppose if something bad happens I'll either die or it'll just be another reason to not go out anymore. I hoped coming to this party could be good for me to stop expecting the worst all the time." His grim eyes consume Dream's, piercing straight through the smiley facade. "I wonder if you're here for good."

And in the span of only a few seconds, Dream's preparation falls completely useless. What is he supposed to say to that? The worst thing was - it was true. Dream *was* going to take advantage of him, he was going to rip his life away from him with no chance for change or to see anything better in the world. Whatever had hurt him before, this would be a cherry on top. It would prove his paranoias of the horrible world to be completely accurate.

It wasn't that he didn't prepare for the humans to talk to him, he'd expected it. But *that...* that wasn't something he'd prepared for, something that cold and out of the blue. He really was ready to accept, and even looked forward to the prospect of a human not wanting to lose their life. But now...it bothered him. That never bothered him before when preparing for this. Why did it have to bother him, why now? Why did it have to bother him right when he was *this* close?

It didn't matter. This is his chance to get human blood.

And he isn't going to blow it.

“I want to be good to you, George.” Their bodies sway closer together, forehead and mask nearly touching. “I promise, I’ll do everything I can.” The words feel disgusting as they leave his mouth, but he says them anyway.

The feeling of dread growing in Dream’s chest is getting unbearable.

Just forget it. It’s not that hard. It’s just a human. It’ll be over soon.

“I like your color choice. Blue is a good color on you.” Dream attempts to lighten the mood.

George sighs. “Thanks.” He trails his hand from Dream’s shoulder to his chest. “I like your shirt. Brown suits you.”

“Brown...?” His gaze flicks down to his clothing. “Um...it’s red.”

“Oh, sorry.” George smiles a little. “I’m...colorblind.”

“Oh.” Dream doesn’t know what to say to that. “..What’s your favorite color, then?”

George smiles a bit. People tend to ask him “what color is this” when he tells them about his colorblindness, so it was a nice change. “Blue.”

“Oh, guess it would be.” Dream says, gesturing vaguely at George’s blue coat.

“I can pretty much only see blue and yellow.” George explains.

For the second time that night, Dream genuinely smiles. The tension is lifted. “That’s a shame.”

“Eh, it’s not that bad.” George leans to rest his head under Dream’s chin. “After 24 years, you get used to it.”

“You’re 24?” Dream widens his eyes in disbelief. “You look like- like you’re fucking 19 years old!”

George laughs against his chest. It makes Dream want to hold him closer. So close he can’t breathe.

“Well, at least I’m not a giant. That’s good.”

“I’m not a giant, you’re just short.”

“Alright, *Dream*, how old are you, then?” There’s that snarky tone again. It was oddly relieving to hear it return.

“21,” Dream takes pride in the authentic answer.

George breathes. “I’m older than you?” He presses his cheek into Dream’s shirt, lowering his arm. “Surprising.”

Dream's fingers press into George's back, he suppresses the impulse to tear through the coat and dig into his skin. "Don't get any ideas."

The two of them pass under a street lantern, illuminating both face and mask in orange-yellows as George innocently looks up. "I don't know what you mean."

They stop moving.

Dream attempts to tug at George's heart to unravel it. "You're so pretty."

Although hesitant, George smiles.

It seems George savors the moment. They get lost in each other's eyes for very different reasons. The lingering scent of burnt-out candles settles between them.

"The dance was...good. You didn't step on me, at least."

Dream chuckles at his boldness and tilts George's chin up. "I wouldn't do that unless you asked."

The latter cringes, but laughs it off and turns away. "You're so weird."

"Weird can be good, at least I'm not boring."

"Yeah..." George's expression becomes unreadable. "I guess you're not."

Dream's eyes wander over George's shoulder, and he notices the moon setting behind the thickly clouded horizon. *It's now or never.*

"What do you say about taking this...elsewhere?" He rests a hand on the human's neck, carefully caressing his vulnerable skin. "Somewhere safe. I promise." *Please make this easy for me.*

George looks back with an initially flushed expression at his words, but suddenly retreats immediately to his stubborn demeanor. "I don't think that's a good idea, Dream.." He nudges Dream's hand off of his neck, and Dream hopes that his best attempt at a disappointed whine is enough to make George reconsider. It seems it does when his expression softens. "But...maybe I'll see you around?"

Dim light peeks out tauntingly above a tavern roof. There wouldn't be enough time to lure George

into the woods before the sun rose. It was impressive; the fact that this random mortal had managed to distract him for such a long time. He even put aside his desire for blood for a while to continue talking with him.

His mouth waters at the thought of sinking his teeth into George's soft skin, the temptation to suck the blood out of him and claim his body as his own made Dream's heart hammer. He was *right here*.

Regardless, he uses better judgement and shoves the instincts down before he can act on them.

"Wait..." George speaks up again. "I need to know what you look like."

A bomb ticks inside Dream. "You- no you don't. I'll-"

Before Dream can even spout an excuse, George slips his hands around his neck and up to the mask's strap to undo the buckle. And just like that, Dream's vision is opened and cleared without the mesh filtering it.

George holds the plastic as if it is porcelain and stares at Dream's features. He looks dumbfounded.

Dream makes an active effort to not open his mouth too much while speaking. "Why did you-"

"*Wow* ." George murmurs.

And in an instant, Dream now feels like the vulnerable one. His face feels naked without the mask over it. He doesn't like the feeling. He doesn't like not knowing what to say. His face feels stiff and embarrassed as George bores into his eyes.

"I...I have to go. See you, George."

"But- wait! Dream, I-"

"Goodbye." Dream's touch lingers over George's nimble fingers as they go their separate ways. It feels as if a rubber band snaps in the air when their contact seizes. Dream can feel George's gaze burn into the back of his head as he turns away. George doesn't follow him.

The vampire strides around an alley corner, out of sight of the people, and then immediately breaks into a sprint.

He crosses into the open plains, and spots the dawnlight growing closer. He mutters breathless curses and picks up the pace more. "Fuck, fuck, come on." The first warm orange light grows closer across the field, and the woods' first trees seem so far. "Shit, come on!" Dream's dash is frantic, he tears the earth beneath his dress shoes with each running step.

Shade grows nearer, and so does a sudden beam of light. He leaps desperately beneath the shaded grove with a grunt as he slams into the tree trunk, growling in pain as a flick of light catches his ankle.

"AGH, fuck!" He closes his fingers around the wound, and winces at the violent hissing noise it makes. Heaving breaths fill his chest as the pain diminishes.

He retracts his hand carefully with a sigh. *That was too close.*

He glances up to the village, and notices the landscape was completely draped in pure sunlight now. Distant figures had begun emerging from doorways to start their day, bustling about and chatting with no awareness that a vampire had nearly killed one of them moments prior.

George.

That was...that wasn't how things were meant to go at all.

Other vampires had done it a million times. It was supposed to be easy - to waltz into the town and pick a human to satisfy his craving for blood. It wasn't meant to be difficult, emotions had no place in such a thing.

Humans never had any bearing over him. He wouldn't let them.

George was different. George was clever, kind of a brat, but also...kind of charming?

Dream's mind returns to the look he saw in George's doe eyes when he looked up at him. So trusting. He saw two sides of someone in the same night.

There was something different about him. Something that he couldn't just forget about, no, he couldn't just go look for a different prey. George had something that...

He reminds me of myself somehow.

Dream's breath leaves his lungs for a moment. He stands on his good foot against the dark oak tree trunk.

He made me feel something enough to stop me from getting what I wanted.

Dream couldn't stand it. Nobody is going to do that to him.

He has to see George again.

Moonlight

Chapter Notes

Hiiii we're back! tysm for the support on this :) really appreciate it!! super swag bro we'll be updating on wednesdays, we don't have the whole story written but we have a lot so we'll upload weekly

Warnings for chapter 2: talk of death/murder, mild homophobia talk, swearing, minor character death

enjoy :D

George wakes up in pain.

He supposes it's the shrimp-like position he sleeps in, it's terrible for his back. The covers softly try to convince him to lay back down, but after another minute of trying to ignore the fact that time exists, he pushes them off coldly. He groans and sits up, twisting his back and listening to the ripple of cracks along his spine. He takes one look at the time and sighs. He'd slept in very late. Not the first time, he supposes.

Memories of the previous night almost immediately plague him, like a parasite that has no intention of leaving now that it's under his skin. The man in that dumb mask, the way his voice sounded, how it made George-

He groans. "Not yet." He murmurs to himself. *It's too early to think about everything.*

He crawls out of bed to force himself to get ready for whatever daylight he has left.

After a small (and frankly terrible; George cannot cook for himself) breakfast of toast and eggs, he opts to clean his vampire hunting gear, disappointed in the fact that he doesn't have enough time left in the day to actually hunt. If he doesn't have enough time to go kill some vampires, he can at least keep his weapons in good shape.

His head spins in muddled cotton thoughts about how fatigued all of his limbs felt. *I shouldn't have come home so late last night.*

Last night.

He allows himself to sink into the breakfast chair cushion. George's hand raises slowly to touch his cheek, remembering the warmth of Dream's chest against it. The laugh, the slow heartbeat, the promises he gave. The promises he got.

He hadn't felt like that in a long, *long* time.

George remembered feeling miserable earlier that night. He remembered the way he resented all the people there and their carelessness, how they could all just go on with their lives while the world they were so carefree in could throw them out at any given chance.

But then that idiot had showed up.

Something about the way he talked made him want to both crumble into a million pieces, but also punch him square in his pretty face.

The way Dream *really* cared, how he held him so close, promised him security. And for the first time in what had felt like eternity, George allowed himself to feel safe.

Safe with a handsome stranger he had never met.

And the most outlandish thing of all, George didn't regret a second of it. In fact, he dare say he *misses* it. Dream had felt like an anchor in a deep sea where George had been wading farther and farther into with no chance of return, and Dream was a landmark pulling him to shore.

That feeling was so, so foreign. He began to think that kind of connection didn't exist anymore.

The feeling of his head to a strong chest. Swaying in the darkness, with nothing to listen to but the sound of a muted orchestra and each other's light breaths. Just thinking about the close proximity with Dream made George hug his arms around himself without realizing it.

Excitement, unpredictability, unexpected closeness. It was all so fast, what happened to all the steps he had to suffer through first? He couldn't just go to the top like that, that kind of

unwarranted kindness never came for free.

Even knowing that, he couldn't help but take the opportunity.

Maybe I'll see you around.

He'd be cheating at life itself if he ever got to experience that again.

His feet shuffle on the carpet as he makes his way to his closet, opening it to a large array of fearsome wooden stakes, muskets, silver bullets, and garlic stashes.

George has been a vampire hunter since he was in his mid-teens, motivated by the large scar that stretched from his left collarbone to shoulder. His desire for revenge is something that festers inside him like a septic wound, the only effective antibiotic being execution.

He digs through his coat closet and lays out the arsenal on his dining table with *clangs* and *thumps*, sitting down to wash and tend to the weaponry. With a dirty rag and some soapy water, he gets to work scrubbing away the grime and dry blood that stained the tools. The room is silent save for the sound of cloth on metal. It was a sound he'd grown to be calmed by. Relief from the intensity of his normal job.

With each swipe away of dust, memories replay again and again in his mind. This was often how he would end up processing things that were new, things that disrupted his routine life - he would busy himself with a familiar routine and seclude himself. The weapons made him feel comfortable. It was something familiar and unchanging - his devotion to a lifestyle that others might call crazy.

What would Dream think about me living like this? George wonders. *Maybe he'd scold me for such a stupid obsession, or- no. He'd laugh. He'd laugh with that dumb smile of his. Then probably say something that makes me want to slap him.* George smiles to himself at the thought, but it doesn't last too long. *Or maybe he would think I'm weird like everyone else does.*

It was a good thing he probably wouldn't see him again. He wouldn't have to find out.

Just as he finishes, there's a knock at the door. He groans. "Coming." He replies, quickly dumping all his weapons in the corner of the room behind the front door. He opens the creaky door, met with a slightly taller ravenette. His friend and neighbor Sapnap. His expression softens.

"Oh, hi Sap."

"Hey George." His friend smirks at him, but there's a hint of kindness in his expression. "Wow, didn't think you'd be home this time of day. You look like shit."

"You're one to talk." George says unphased. "I wasn't really expecting visitors, but you can come in." The brunette says, stepping out of the way. He does his best to sound like he had been having a regular day, like nothing was changed. Like he hadn't gone out last night and made a massive, unpredictable ripple in his routine he'd grown so used to. Sapnap laughs and steps inside, thanking him.

"You need something?" George asks, closing the door.

"Nah," Sapnap says, looking around the room a little. "Just wanted to ask how you've been since, you know, you never wanna hang out with me. It's been a while."

"It's been like a week! I don't come to your house *one time* and you won't stop complaining about it." George smiles, rolling his eyes.

"I miss you!" He pouts, dramatically sticking his lip out. "Everyone else in this town is an asshole."

"Can't argue with that." George says, but hesitates. "Mostly."

Sapnap's eyes land on the weapons messily stacked in the corner of the room. "Hm. I assume you're still doing the whole vampire hunting thing?" He asks. George looks over at where Sapnap's eyes are fixed. "Well, yeah, it doesn't just go away. It's a hobby." He says, unsure what else to call it. *It's an addiction.*

George begins walking his way into the living room as a signal for Sapnap to follow. He plops down at the seat he was at before answering the door, and Sapnap sits next to him a seat away and slouches down casually. He'd gotten used to having him over often, and though George wasn't the most extroverted person, he had to admit he enjoyed the company.

"So how've you been?" George asks.

"Good, good." Sapnap says. "Work is boring, but wood isn't going to cut itself, y'know. Makes money, at least. Oh- and I came to ask, were you at the town square last night? I heard they were hosting an event."

George's eyes flicker up. "Yeah, how'd you know?"

"You left the house late." Sapnap points out. "I was just wondering, since there were a lot of people down there. You meet anyone?" He questions, returning to his cocky and teasing demeanor.

"Mm, no." George answers immediately. He returns his gaze to his fingers and absently traces a circle on the top of his hand.

Sapnap knows he's lying once the blood begins to rush to his face, uncomfortably riveting memories of last night occupying his brain. He hates that he can't hide his emotions easily, especially from Sapnap.

"Wait, you did, didn't you?" Sapnap beams at him. George confirms his suspicion when he brings a hand to his face. "Dude, congrats!"

"I didn't, I'm serious." George says again, sounding more unsure now.

"Come on man, just tell me about him." Sapnap says excitedly. He takes on a little more of a soft tone when he notices George's discomfort. "Look, you know I don't care if it's a guy right?"

George had told Sapnap about not being interested in girls about a year after he first moved in. It was after a painfully vulnerable conversation telling him about his family and why he had to leave. Though he didn't tell him everything, Sapnap's comfort and support meant more to him than he'd ever admit. It was a memory he cherished.

"I..." He runs a hand through his hair. "I know but.. It still feels weird to talk about it." George says carefully. His tone lowers to a mutter. "Other people don't-If anyone hears, I..."

"No one's listening dude." Sapnap reassures. "It's just me." George meets his eyes. It was the same look he remembered from all those nights ago, so genuine and different from his usually harsh demeanor. George sighs. Sapnap always had a way of getting him to talk.

"Okay well.. I did meet this guy.." He says, looking down a little. He pauses before speaking again, swallowing the spit building in his mouth. "He bought me a drink and we danced a bit. I feel like.. I think I may have...trusted him too much. No, I definitely did."

"Oh god, did he do something?" Sapnap sits up.

"No," George assures, seeing Sapnap relax. "No, I just felt like I was oversharing sometimes. Like...yeah. I told him a lot. But...he was really uh...sweet, actually." George can't fight the fond smile growing on his face. "It's just weird that I felt so like.. drawn to him? I dunno. I'm not usually the, uhm...relationship type." George tugs at his shirt collar that suddenly is tight and clingy on him, feeling fidgety and hot before realizing Sapnap's silence was beckoning him to continue. "He was really witty, I liked hearing him talk to me."

"What's his name?" Sapnap asks.

"Dream." George says. He pauses before adding, "Not the most conventional name, I know." with a small smile.

"He sounds like a real charmer." Sapnap says. "I haven't seen you look like that *ever* when talking about someone." He leans his elbows on the table with a cocky grin. "You should go for it."

"Ugh, I don't think I'm ready for that." George groans, throwing his head back with a thud.

“C’mon man, you gotta take the opportunity before he thinks you’re not interested or something. You should go for things more, it always feels like you just wait for the guys to come to you and then things just fall apart when you don’t put equal effort in. It’s already hard enough for you as is.”

“I know, it’s just...stressful. He makes me nervous, but I guess that’s technically a good thing...like in relationships, or whatever. I don’t know. He’s just like- like out of my league, I guess? But then he did things like...literally the first thing he said to me was *hey baby*,” George makes his best attempt to lower his voice to a similar pitch to Dream’s, forcing a bad american accent. It doesn’t work at all and Sapnap snickers. “Like, who does that?”

“*Wot-eva*. Sounds to *me* like you’re whipped. You’re not giving it a chance. You’re not gonna know if he likes you if you don’t like, try. Besides, he’s already using pet names.”

“Ugh, I.. I don’t know.” George smiled. The blooming warmth in his chest was something he wasn’t sure he’d ever get used to. “He’s probably into women, you know.”

“It sounds like he was pretty dead set on flirting with you.” Sapnap repeats, slowly shrugging. “I dunno, man.”

George sighs. “Me neither. I don’t even know if I’ll see him again.”

Sapnap places a hand on his shoulder. “Well you know what to do if you get the chance. Don’t let him pass you by.”

Don’t let your chance go. George settles.

The forest breeze is warm against Dream’s skin. He hated it, it was always like that in the day, the sun’s wrath couldn’t be kept at bay even by the dense woods. It still found a way to taunt him even if it couldn’t get under the canopy’s shadows.

The tiny metal is cold in his fingers as he holds it up to his mouth. He begins gently at first, filing away at his fangs with ease. He presses the tool against the sharp tip, rubbing back and forth rhythmically.

It’s painful, so he doesn’t want to force it, but he finds that it’s not effective if it doesn’t hurt. Be begins to file harder, pausing to spit. It was times like this that Dream wishes he could see himself in a mirror to make sure he didn’t fuck anything up.

It felt wrong, like he was removing an essential part of who he was and what he lived for as he ground the tooth away, but he knew he had to. Means to an end.

If George somehow saw his teeth, it would be over. The longer he could keep up this charade, the more chances he'd have to attack.

Not that he needed more than one. He wouldn't hesitate. Not again.

He files away at the other fang and winces when it scrapes against the tool, one movement at a time his vampiric teeth become less prominent.

Once they're even he looks just a little more human. His thumbs run over the teeth tips; it feels strange to not be pricked when he touches them. Perfect. Enough to appear human, but still sharp enough to dig under skin. He'd just have to bite a little harder. It felt unnatural, but it was necessary. He turns to watch the last of the day's sunlight disappear below the horizon.

George wouldn't get away this time.

Knock knock. George glances upwards. *Sapnap again? What the hell does he need this time?*

"Coming!" He stands with a groan, and gathers the stakes of varying sharpness in his arms sloppily. He dumps them to the side of his couch and hurriedly gathers silver bullets and garlic bags to shove next to the countless weapons so that they would be in some sort of order and out of the way.

Another knock is heard. "I *said* I'm coming, Sapnap!" God, he's always so impatient. It made George consider not opening the door at all just to piss him off.

Regardless, he walks over and twists the slightly creaky knob.

George stops himself from making a disgruntled comment on how he can't get any alone time when he looks up to see someone who *definitely* wasn't Sapnap.

The tall man that stands before him was unexpected. Dirty blonde. Stacked posture. Long-sleeved, white button-up shirt with beige pants, a fitted dark-olive vest on top. He looked too young to be some homeless person asking for money, well-kept, too, telling from his clear, sun-kissed skin and freckled cheeks.

“Who’s Sapnap?” The blonde asks, raising a brow. His voice is like hot syrup, George swears he almost hears a possessive undertone in it. The visitor’s expression is self assured, looking down on George with an unsettling familiarity.

George squints. “Who...?” As he contemplates who this man was, it suddenly hits him.

Dream looks different in the porchlight than in the town square’s darkness.

The piercing eyes, the beautifully messy way that his hair just barely fell over his forehead, the expression on his face last night...he was just as enthralled as George had been. His touch, his voice, his safeness, his warmth...

It was Dream.

His heart plummets.

The same Dream he had been thinking nonstop about the past few hours like some dumb giddy teenager going on a date.

He has to stop himself from drinking in his incredible facial features all over again. “Oh, um...you’re Dream. Right.” George clears his throat. The sudden urge to fix his painfully casual appearance overwhelms him. “I-I didn’t think anyone would come by this time of night.” He sounds much more nervous than he would’ve liked.

Dream leans an elbow against the doorframe and grins down at him. George feels small. His mind is suddenly plagued with memories from the previous night, how he trusted Dream with a part of himself that he never showed to anyone, leaning on him, *relying* on him. How stupid he had felt for doing it. How he wants to do it again, and again, even now when-

“Oh, it’s alright, I don’t mind.” Somehow, George feels trapped simply from the way Dream was looking at him. “I think you look nice, actually.”

George laughs breathily. God, his voice. He wanted to be so close to it. He wanted to hear it over and over.

God, I really do have it bad, don't I?

"I don't, you don't have to pretend, you know." A sheepish smile creeps onto his face. "You're dressed much better, anyways."

"I'm not lying, George." The sound of George's name in Dream's mouth made him internally melt. It sounded like it belonged on his lips. "But yeah, the reason I'm here is I was wondering if you would be interested in maybe talking some more?" Dream tilts his head down to level more with George. It makes George's breath stutter. "Maybe...inside?"

Sparks of infatuation creep down George's spine. *He has to be joking.* George laughs in an attempt to calm his heart slamming to his ribcage. "I can't believe you actually came to see me again- wait, how did you find where I *live*? !"

"Oh, it was easy," Dream boasts. "I just knocked at every house with blue decorations. You wore all blue last night, said it was your favorite color."

George bites away a smile. *He remembered my favorite colour.* "That's like...psychopath behaviour."

Dream wheezes. It was such a stupid, contagious laugh. "*Psychopath?* I'm just- I wanted-"

"Yeah?" George purrs. His flirty nature was definitely going to be the end of him. "What did you want?"

"I just wanted to see you again," Dream admits. "I thought we had a good time."

George's face brightens. "You think so...?"

"Of course," Dream rests a hand on George's shoulder. The firm hold makes him shiver. "So...can I come in?"

George's stomach drops. He wants to say yes. He really does.

His eyes briefly glance to his hunting equipment behind the door before returning to Dream.

“I.. I don’t think that’s a great idea right now..” George says slowly, carefully stepping back from the doorway so his feet are out of view. “Maybe we can take a walk?” He suggests, gently kicking away his bag of weaponry and hoping Dream doesn’t hear it.

Dream looks disappointed, but he agrees nonetheless. “Okay, let’s take a walk.”

George smiles a bit, “Alright, just let me get dressed. Hold on.” Dream nods.

The moment he closes the door, George exhales a breath he didn’t know he was holding.

He...he wants to spend time with me. I didn’t fuck anything up yet.

His heart swells, running a hand through his fluffy hair. *I still have a chance.*

George doesn’t stand a chance.

Dream had guessed his flirty approach the previous night would be effective, but god, the idiot looked practically lovestruck. It was sad, honestly.

If George wasn’t human, Dream might’ve actually considered him someone of interest - attractive, witty, not one dimensional. It made him entertaining for sure.

Too bad Dream would kill him by the end of the night. He might miss it.

George emerges from the doorway once again, but this time much more presentable looking. His hair is brushed to one side, and is dressed in an intricately patterned blue vest with a light grey undershirt and dark pants. He looked more delicious than ever. It was as if fate was tempting him.

“Wow, George,” George turns his head to the side with an embarrassed expression. “You put all that on for me?”

Dream steps to the side to allow George to stand beside him. Even in dress shoes, George still stands below Dream's chin. "Don't feel too special, I just don't want people thinking I'm rubbish here." He rolls his eyes.

He closes and locks his front door before the two of them proceed on a walk down the town's street.

"Since you're new in town, you want a tour?"

"I'd like that." Dream grins down at him as if they were best friends.

They exit the small rusty gate between George's house and the road, past the mossy stone wall. The environment is beginning to grow on Dream, considering he often stays out in the woods. Once you ignore all the inconsiderate human residents, it's actually rather cozy inside.

The tense silence between them prompts George to remember Sapnap's earlier advice, which causes him to fidget in his pockets. George wasn't much of a flirter (or a talker, to be honest), but he knew what he'd promised. Just go for it.

"So, when did you move into town?"

"Uh, recently." Dream says emptily, unable to make up a convincing answer on the spot. "Like, a month ago."

George doesn't seem to read into it before responding. "Nice, where'd you move from?"

"Fairfield county." Dream says, spewing the name of the first town he can think of. George still doesn't catch on, he's thankful for the older's obliviousness. "When did you move here?"

"Oh, I've been in this area my whole life. Though I moved into my house about 6 years ago." George says simply, looking at the stone sidewalk.

"Wow, so you must know your way around pretty well then."

"I'd say so."

They turn the corner of the street, now in view of more lights from different stores lined up the street. Dream squints a bit, sensitive to the shine.

"What do you think about getting some food?" George asks, cautious but daring.

Dream doesn't eat anything but blood, he can hardly stand the taste of small animals, let alone *human food*. Despite this, he still manages to answer after a little hesitation. "Are you asking me out, George?"

George ignores his heart's stutter when Dream says his name, voice low. Dream knows it gets to

him. He's too easy. "No, I'm asking if you want food."

"I think you're asking me out. I accept." Dream says, eyes shining.

George laughs breathily, "Right then, what do you want to eat?"

He isn't sure what to say, let alone how he will stomach the food he's about to try and eat.

"Whatever you'd like." He says eventually.

"Maybe we can get ice cream." George says with a smile, looking up. Dream nods, making his best 'I can't wait to have ice cream' face. "That sounds good."

Venturing down the street, the pair stops at a small ice cream parlor at a street corner, the window displays various ice cream cones and lists of a handful of flavors. The street lanterns reflect in the window of the top half of the entry door. "I used to come here a lot with my parents." George says.

"Really? That sounds nice." Dream responds, opening the door for the shorter. He thanks him and walks inside, the taller following not far behind.

When they get to the white granite counter, there's an assortment of colors in bins behind the glass. Dream runs his eyes over the various flavor names, not really thinking about what any of them mean. George orders his flavor and turns to Dream, waiting for him to recite his order. He doesn't. "Dream?"

"Um.. I'm not that hungry, I probably won't get anything. How about we just go somewhere together...alone, preferably?"

"Aw, c'mon. There's always room for ice cream. I'll pay, I'm serious."

Dream wanted to volunteer to pay, but he didn't exactly have any money to pay with. "Uh, alright, if you insist...any flavor you recommend?"

"I like cookies and creme, but maybe you'd like chocolate or something? That's pretty good too." George turns to him. Dream's staring a little. He turns to face the employee across the counter.

"Then I'll get one scoop of chocolate, please."

Once the transaction is complete, the two of them exit the shop and walk out onto the dark street. They make their way down the concrete to the outskirts of town with shops and houses becoming more scattered. "How's your ice cream?" Dream asks.

"Good, yours?"

Dream regrets asking once he realizes now George is going to watch him eat. He smiles uncertainly, taking a small lick of his dripping ice cream cone (George thinks it's cute).

It takes everything he has not to gag.

Dream swallows, hating the disgustingly sweet flavor on his tongue. He's starting to regret not just picking another human to go after. He nods at George, "It's good."

Apparently George buys it. "Yeah, I love their ice cream. Oh- there's a park closeby, do you want to go there? It might be nice to show you around a bit."

"Depends," Dream lowers his tone to a rumble. "Will it just be us there?"

George breathes, eyes fixed to the rocky path. "I- yeah, it's pretty quiet there. Especially this time of night, almost nobody comes out here."

Perfect. "Not you, though? You still come out here, why's that?"

George hesitates. "It doesn't scare me like other people."

Dream's head turns to George. George doesn't look up.

"What doesn't scare you?" He asks carefully.

George's brows lower slightly at the ground. "*Vampires.*"

The way he says the word is plagued with disgust, and his eyes hold a type of contempt that Dream had never seen before in him.

Dream chuckles ironically. "Vampires?"

"Yeah." George stops eating his ice cream. It drips down the edges of the cone. "Of course they wouldn't tell you before you moved here. The things are monsters, nobody would actually move here if they knew."

Dream feels insulted. *Monsters. I'll show you what a monster is you-*

"But hey, the park almost never has vampires. We'll be fine." George smiles up at him.

Dream smiles back. "Yup, it's just us. Besides, I'll be here to protect you."

George rolls his eyes, feigning annoyance. He can't help the small smile on his face.

George finishes his ice cream, and Dream throws his away into a trash bin when George isn't

looking.

The park they arrive at is truly beautiful. It wasn't big - it was a simple grassy clearing with some benches here and there, patches of vibrant flowers that were difficult to see under the night sky and a small creek that ran along a gravel path. The area was bordered by buildings out of use and empty, most of which were stores and restaurants that were closed up for the night.

"Wow," Dream exhales. "I...I'll give it to you, this *is* pretty." Somehow, after his whole life around the village, Dream had never bothered to come to this part of town. It was actually kind of nice. He could see why someone as introverted and quiet-natured as George would like it.

George grins. "Right? I love it here."

The two make their way to a bench against the back wall of a coffee shop. George sits first, pulling his legs and arms close to himself allow Dream plenty of room to sit beside him.

"I come here a lot...well, not a lot, really. Just when I get free time anymore." George's eyes watch the sky, seeming to take in every detail as if he'd seen them a million times. "I wish I got more time to come here."

"Why don't you?" Dream places an arm on the bench's back, nearly touching George's shoulders. "What keeps you from it? You should do some good things for yourself."

"I..." George folds his arms together. He does that a lot, Dream notices. "I don't have the time."

"Well," Dream dares to rest his arm over George's shoulder. George squirms a bit. "You have the time now."

"Yeah...yeah, I guess I do." He gives a smile. "What about you?"

"Me?" Dream muses. "What *about* me?"

"What do *you* do when you get free time? You haven't told me a lot about yourself."

Dream scoffs. Free time wasn't really a thing to him. All his time is spent either hunting, fighting other vampires or...

Right, there was one thing.

"I make things sometimes, I guess."

"Make things?" George questions. He tilts his head to look at his face. "Like what?"

"Like..." God, this was so dumb. Dream didn't plan on telling anyone about this, especially not

someone like George. “Treehouses. I-I make treehouses. Sometimes.” It wasn’t a lie, he did make houses in trees. Even if they were kind of a mess.

The fascination on George’s face makes Dream realize that yes, it was definitely a bad idea to bring it up. “Really? You can *make treehouses*? That’s, like, cool! I didn’t really figure you to be the type.”

Dream rolls his eyes. “No, no, forget I said anything. It’s-it’s dumb. I don’t even do it that much.”

George turns his body to face Dream. Their knees touch. “Sounds like you’re embarrassed.” He smirks.

Dream frowns. He wants to wipe the stupid smirk off of his face right then. “I’m not embarrassed.”

“It’s okay, you don’t have to lie.” George pushes. “I think it’s nice you have a hobby like that.”

Dream sighs and drags a hand down his face in exasperation. “Okay, okay. Fine.” Dream looks to the grass in an attempt to avoid George’s stupid grin, and spots a blue orchid by his feet. He removes his arm from around George to lean down and picks it.

“Hey, look what I got for you.” He holds it to George’s chest. His knuckles brush lightly over his shirt.

George scrunches his nose up at it, but smiles and takes it between his fingers like a feather. “For...me? Why? You just- you just got this off the ground.”

“Because, it’s cute.” Dream trails his fingers up to caress George’s cheek. “Like you.”

George attempts to cover his face in his hands, but the red still shows. “Why would you-” He giggles nervously. “Why would you say something like that?”

He laughs at how fast George’s brattiness flees. “Cuz, I can.”

“I’m glad other people aren’t here, they might think we’re, like..”

“What?”

George’s voice turns to a mutter. “On a date, or something.” He turns away. His fingers run nervously back and forth on his knees.

“And if they did?”

George opens his mouth to respond, but closes it again. He stares at his hands instead of choosing to look at Dream.

The sound of George's pulse was starting to get unbearable. Especially when it got quiet. There was nothing stopping Dream right now, he realizes. This was the moment he was waiting-

"How do you do that?" George suddenly says.

"Do what?"

"How do you just...talk like that," George makes eye contact with him. It's paralyzing. Dream forgot how rich and deep they were. "And not feel weird?"

He considers the question for a moment. He remembered vaguely hearing that humans were discouraged from having romantic relations with those of the same gender, but he never really understood why. Dumb rule, if you asked him.

He answers honestly. "It's not weird to me." Dream shrugs. "It makes literally zero sense for someone else to tell you who to love."

George's heart skips a beat. *Love.*

"I- yeah. Yeah, I guess you're right." George relaxes his shoulders and smiles.

Dream gets a strange sense of pride from it, and feels his heart swell. *He has a nice smile.*

Dream's heart stops.

He's your prey. Not a friend. Not a...person of interest.

Snap out of it.

Dream stands abruptly.

George looks at him in confusion. "Dream?"

"I think we should get going." Dream deadpans. He begins walking along the building wall. George wants to question it, but walks after him.

"Wait, was it- was it something I did?"

"No, no." Dream's eyes are fixed forwards. "I just think that we should go."

George narrows his eyes. “You got nervous, didn’t you?”

“Stop.”

“You don’t have to hide it, I-”

George is cut off mid sentence by a grab to his forearms and a shove to the nearby brick wall. The breath is knocked out of him for a moment.

“I *said*, ” Dream growls. “ *to stop*.”

George does.

There’s a stretch of silence. With George against the wall like this, it’s almost laughable how easy it would be for Dream to bite George right now and draw out his blood. He’s salivating at the thought.

“Dream?” George questions, once he’s quiet for too long. Dream leans in and takes in the scent of George’s skin, yearning for a taste of the blood beneath. His breath is shallow, heart beating animalistically in his chest. He puts a hand on George’s shoulder, gently trailing to his pale neck and up to his cheek. His frame is small, delicate. His palm alone reaches from George’s collarbone to jawline. George shudders under his touch.

“Dream..?” George sounds nervous.

Dream recalls what George had said the previous night, all that talk about being taken advantage of and hurt. It made his heart ache in the same way again. Was he really going to be the one to take his life? When the worst he’d done to him was a couple throw away insults?

Come on. Just do it. Dream swears his pupils are shaking. *He’s right here, just bite him.*

He blinks harshly. Against his body’s wishes, he lowers his hand and takes a step back. George looks up at him with a flustered expression.

“Sorry.” Dream says, quietly. “I’m sorry.”

“It’s.. okay.” George says in response, not completely sure what he was apologizing for. The air is tense, but they’re both hoping the tension will lift soon enough, at least Dream hopes it will. “Hey,

um.. Would you be willing to walk me home?"

"Of course." Dream clears his throat, adjusting his shirt collar.

The walk back is somewhat conversationless, they both take the time to admire their environment. And probably to take time to avoid thinking about what just happened. Dream looks over at George without turning his head to look.

He walks with his hands shoved deep in his dress pants' pockets, his eyes overly concentrated on the passing buildings on the opposite side of Dream. Though it was hard to see in the heavy night, there was still a hint of roseiness on his cheeks.

Did George know now? Was what he just did too obvious, is that why he was so quiet? Maybe Dream had made it painfully obvious at this point that he was a vampire, and though humans were dense, he had a feeling George was bright enough to see things like that. Was his focus on the trees beside him a misplaced worry for his life? If he knew he was walking next to a vampire right now, though, why didn't he just run? Or maybe he thought running would get him killed, so instead he wants to act like nothing's wrong?

My chance might've just been blown. If only I could control my goddamn instincts.

Dream exhales slowly, and returns his focus to the bricked path. *Maybe getting to know him was a bad idea. Now I'm stuck.*

Suddenly, Dream hears a commotion of panicked rambling and orders to his right. He spots a group of paramedics and nurses, crowded around an area at the mouth of the woods. They're in the middle of removing a body found within, a victim of a vampire attack. George knows what it means as soon as the stretcher passes them by. Dream winces.

What a mood killer.

"Yikes," Dream says. "That.. sucks."

"Yeah." George says. His voice is a murmur. Dream begins to walk, inciting George to continue with him. He follows after a moment of hesitation. *He's still responding to you. Maybe he doesn't know.*

"Glad we went to the park instead, huh?" Dream tries. When he gets no response, he turns to see

George with his hands shoved in his pockets and head to the ground. “George..?”

George looks up. “Hm?” His expression had changed to anything but friendly.

“You...alright?”

George drops his head again. “It’s nothing.”

Dream frowns. *He must have pieced it all together. That’s why he’s being so cold.*

The two approach George’s house and come to a stop. George had at least lifted his head a little, but was obviously still upset by the sight they’d passed. Dream can’t help but feel a little bad for him. George put up with a lot.

“Hey,” Dream carefully rests a hand on George’s forearm, and George looks up. “You’re...” He resists cringing at his own words. “You’re gonna be alright.”

George’s face softens, and he offers a weak smile. “I know, I know. Thank you, I had a good time, really. Even if you’re kinda weird sometimes.”

Dream suppresses arguing with the claim. Maybe George didn’t hate his guts after all. “I look forward to next time. This was fun.” The words leave his mouth without a second thought. They both smile. It was such a relief to see George smile again.

“Can...” George mutters. “Can I hug you?”

Dream doesn’t even respond with words, and instead pulls George to his chest. George has to stand on the tip of his toes to reach above Dream’s shoulders, and locks his arms around his neck. Dream tightens his hold around him.

Dream’s hands turn to fists behind George’s back. With his face right next to George’s like this, the scent of rich blood is overwhelming. *No. Not now.* George doesn’t seem to notice his slowed breathing as they separate.

“See you.” Dream promises.

George smiles warmly. “See you.”

And before he knows it, George is closing his front door with a last wave to him.

Click.

It feels like a huge weight is lifted from Dream's shoulders. *Thank God that's over.*

Dream begins his stroll back to the forest, mind aimlessly wandering to things from the night. Things like George's dimples that show when he smiles, things like how his hair fluffs up a lot at the top, things like how when they hug Dream can almost taste his blood.

By the time he looks up again, Dream is in the middle of the forest with no human life in sight.

Wow. He slumps against a tree. *I'm pathetic.*

His stomach growls.

It was just a bad time. He tells himself. *I would've bitten him if I had more time. He's no different than anyone else. He's just...*

"I don't want to hurt him like that." His voice is weak. The spoken truth hangs in the air, and sinks into every fiber of his being.

He stands upright.

"There's something wrong with me," He croaks. "It's *easy*, just like everyone says it is..." He tries to imagine finding George in the forest, pouncing on him and tearing his throat open like so many other vampires did every night. He tries to imagine feeling nothing when he makes eye contact with him, watching the dark brown color drain from his eyes.

But it only makes him more upset.

His eyes meet the ground.

"I don't like him."

Yes you do.

“I can’t like him.”

Why not?

“He’s just a target. That’s it.”

Do you really believe that?

“I-I don’t know...why can’t I just...” He grits his teeth.

Indecision drowns him.

He whips around to grip the tree in both his hands, tears it out of the ground with a yell and slams it to the forest floor.

Open Wounds

Chapter Notes

Im really happy with how well this is doing so thank you all for your comments again
!! a quick reminder to check out my second author for this story at
<https://www.wattpad.com/user/VanilluvCoffee> :) thank you again

Warnings for chapter 3: blood, swearing, hunting, injury

enjoy :D

George is getting ready for bed when he hears a distant cracking in the woods.

He pauses briefly at the sound, before a much louder slam follows, paired with a yell. Instead of the normal screams he'd grown horribly used to that sounded terrified or blood-curdling, it sounded completely furious. It's unsettling, and makes his mind start to run on high gear. He's worried if he stops too long to question it, he'll do something he'll regret.

His mind briefly considers Dream's safety being in jeopardy, before he shoos the thought away.
Dream can probably protect himself anyway.

He turns off his lights, smothers his candles, and crawls into his bed. The room is dark and quiet, making his shuffling around in the sheets loud in the empty space.

His mind wanders to the events of their evening walk.

George enjoys their banter, he could drink in Dream's words like a strong wine and enjoy feeling tipsy. His eyes have a softness to them despite the rest of him being so arrogant, there's something so welcoming in the way he looks at him.

He lays in the quiet for a moment.

Can I hug you? He'd said. God, he was so lame. Asking for something as simple as a hug like it was the biggest favor of his life; he was really touch-starved.

He didn't regret asking, though. The pull to Dream's chest was an overwhelmingly great reward for the embarrassment he'd endured. George could feel the strong fingers on his back, holding, *pulling* him closer. His skin still tingled where Dream had touched. He felt his arms around him, holding his body away from the rest of the Earth. Nothing could hurt him.

Hurt. Another memory shatters the comfort, and he feels a pang in his stomach.

The brick wall against his back *had* hurt. Not a lot, but it did. He didn't really notice it until now, when he thought of it again. He couldn't focus on anything then except how quickly Dream was able to grab him and shove him to the wall, leaving him completely at his mercy.

His breathing grows heavy.

He remembered Dream's fingers gripping his forearms, how in mere seconds he had lost all ability to move how he chose.

He should've hated it.

George's eyes are wide as he stares into his dark room. He hadn't blinked in a while.

He could've done anything to me. George swallows the growing stiffness on his tongue. *Anything.*

His heart was beating way too fast to just be lying in bed. His thoughts continue to spill over.

He thought of Dream holding his forearms again, but trailing them up to his shoulders, to his chest, to his sides. George wouldn't move. *Stop. Stop thinking.* He imagined what Dream's fingers would feel like under his chin, how it would feel for Dream to use his thumb to pull on his bottom lip. *Quit it.* How it would feel for his body to be pressed to the wall as Dream leaned down to press his lips to his own.

George coughs. *Fuck.* His fingers cling to the sheets.

You just met Dream, come on.

Flustered shame clouds his brain, he gets angry at himself for considering the possibilities.

George manages to feel a little more lost and somehow at home each time they are together.

It's so strange, considering what little time the pair have spent together. Something about it makes George feel like they've been friends their whole lives. Remnants of the time they'd spent together linger in his mind as his head hits the pillow, falling nearly as hard as he's falling for Dream.

He won't admit it just yet.

George wakes to spend yet another day in solitude, as he often does.

His mind wanders in and out of consciousness, fleeting thoughts of how he fell asleep tease him to stay in bed longer, his cotton gray sheets are warm and try to lure him back into slumber.

He can't afford to sleep in again.

The moment his eyes open, he jolts out of bed to throw on his work clothes. He'd grown so used to it; the rushed way he prepares himself in the morning to ensure not a second was wasted. It was a habit at this point. There was never enough time. He would do as many things at once as he could, somehow managing to throw a shirt on and brush his teeth at the same time, nearly tripping over himself as he goes to spit out the toothpaste in his mouth. If anyone could see him, they'd think he was being chased around by a ghost or something.

He would visit Sapnap, but he had work. Being an asocial individual, he doesn't have many other friends to go to, but he didn't mind it. Fewer friends, fewer risks.

Considering he'd actually woken up on time, he decides it's prime time to get some vampire hunting in. His equipment lays pre-organized by his door in a one-strap backpack, he grabs it and slings it over his shoulder, and heads out the door.

Vampire hunting became an addiction to him at a relatively young age. Whenever he fails to catch one, he feels like he's failed the world, and all those taken from it by those monsters. It's always been an activity that gets his adrenaline going, keeps his heart pumping rapidly in his chest. He enjoys the thrill of taking back from those who'd taken from him, time and time again.

The familiar sound of a loaded stake clicking against his crossbow repeats with each step towards the woods and away from humanity. The sun was about to rise over the horizon, faint chimes and flags waving are the only sounds this early. This was the best time to go out, people weren't awake yet and wouldn't see him, and vampires that could've been lurking would've retreated already back to the woods.

He comes to a stop at the pathway entrance to the daunting ocean of trees. The sun had risen completely now, and the shadow between George and the land of monsters lay only a couple feet in front of him.

A sigh leaves his chapped lips as he ventures off into the deep woods.

A loud knock breaks the silence.

What horrible timing, George thinks, fumbling with the gauze roll he was attempting to wrap around his shoulder.

"Coming," He calls out.

He sighs deeply and stands, ripping off the gauze strip and lazily tucking the bandage in. The job he's done is sloppy, blood continues to seep through the bandage. He throws on an unbuttoned formal shirt, rushing to button what he could. He hopes whoever's at the door will make their visit brief. He approaches his front door and opens it with a familiar creaking sound.

He has to look up to compensate for the tall man standing on his porch.

Upon recognizing Dream, he instantly grows self conscious of what he's wearing.

Why does he only come by when I look like shit?

“Oh, Dream. Hello. It’s um...it’s night time.” George tries an awkward laugh, but Dream doesn’t reciprocate it.

“Ge- Oh my *God*, what the hell happened to you?!”

“Oh, uh-“ He notices that Dream’s eyes were fixed on his bleeding wound. “Oh, I uh- I fell. On some rocks.” George knew the lie was easy to see through, but he simply hoped Dream would buy it.

He didn’t. “*Rocks?* What the- n-no those were NOT rocks, George!” He reaches a hand out to a wound in George’s side that wasn’t patched up yet, and George leans away a little. The gash was a little worse than Dream needed to know.

“I’m okay, I’m okay, Dream.” George laughs. He has grown so used to Dream’s calm confidence, it was almost funny to see him so riled up over just a couple of injuries. “I-I got it, I think. It’s not that bad.”

“*Not that bad?*” Dream huffs in disbelief. “Okay, let me in. I’m gonna help.”

“Well, if you insist,” George steps to the side, leaving a clear entryway. “it’s open.” He rolls his eyes.

“No- like-“ Dream groans and rubs his palm across his forehead. “Can I come in, George?”

George raises a brow and laughs a little. “Um...yes? You can come in, Dream.”

“Great.” He hurriedly says, and steps inside to close the door behind him. He hovers his hand over George’s arm for a moment, and their eyes meet. “Can I touch you?”

George’s tongue is caught in his throat. He knows why Dream is asking, and he wonders if the memory of last night replays in Dream’s mind on repeat like it did in his. The thought of Dream lying awake at night and reliving the moment of “Yeah, it’s okay.” It comes out as a strained whisper.

Dream smiles amicably, and carefully takes his arm to lead him into the house. The return of his touch makes George's skin feel like it's on fire. "Where's your cleaning supplies?"

"It's mostly laid out, already, I was kinda in the middle of fixing myself up when you got here."

They walk to George's living room couch, the room is dimly lit with some candles. Bandages, cleaning alcohol, washcloths, and bottles of water sit disorganized on the coffee table. Dream assists George in sitting down first and takes a water bottle and a cloth in his hands before sitting behind George.

"The shirt may have to come off." Dream says awkwardly, attempting to keep his voice level.

"Wait-" George's voice hardly comes out as a whisper, he coughs in an attempt to try to cover it up. "No- Don't take it off, just.. Remove one sleeve. Is that okay?"

"Of course, whatever makes you comfortable." Dream says in a low voice, beside his ear. He was closer than George thought he was.

George's stomach twists. He stares forward as he feels Dream's breath by his ear.

"Okay, okay. Hold your arms out."

George obeys, sticking his arms straight out in front of him. Dream reaches under his arms to reach to the buttons, (only three of which were actually holding it together), and carefully undoes each one.

"Why do you just have three of these buttoned? Aiming to impress someone?" Dream teases, a sly smile playing at his lips.

George chokes on his spit for a moment. " *What?* Why would you say that?" How was he meant to respond to that? "I just threw it on when I heard a knock at the door. It's your fault, actually."

“My fault...” Dream repeats flatly, slipping the shirt off of George's right shoulder, keeping the left side up carefully. “Guess it’s good I came here when I did, then.”

“What’s *that* supposed to mean?”

“You might’ve had something more...boring on.”

George was really glad that he wasn’t facing Dream right now. The blush on his face would be horrifically obvious. “Boring.” George echoes. Dream wasn’t lying when he mentioned not seeing a difference between flirting with a guy rather than a girl.

Dream is quiet behind him when he slowly traces a cool finger down George’s right shoulder blade, then back up, and lingering close to the gash at the top of his shoulder. He shivers. Dream’s hand stops moving and rests close to the bleeding tear in his skin.

“Dream..?” George questions. “Are you gonna clean it?”

“Hm?” Dream’s hand pulls away. “Oh, yeah. Yeah, I am.”

George would kill to know what he was thinking.

Shuffling and the sound of a water bottle cap unscrewing comes from behind him, and Dream rests a hand back on George’s right shoulder. “Um...” Dream begins. “I haven’t actually...done this. I haven’t done this before.” He admits.

“Wait, really?” George muses. “You’ve never cleaned a cut, like, ever?”

“Well, I *have* , but it’s been a really, really long time.” His tone is a mixture of fondness and sorrow. “Just, like, tell me what I have to do or whatever.”

“Oh, well, alright.” George smiles at the knowledge that he knew something Dream didn’t. “Okay, so just take that water and hold the rag at the bottom of the wound, and slowly pour the water on top of it.” All nerves fall away from him as he explains.

“Alright, I can do that.” The soft rag rests against George’s back, and without warning, cold water splashes onto the wound.

“OW!” George yells, resisting the urge to jump off the couch.

“Oh-! Oh God, sorry!” Dream immediately pulls the water away.

George winces at the sting, but knows the alcohol would feel a lot worse. “Oh my god, you *suck* at this.” His voice is slurred with accent.

“What?!” Dream gasps, taking great offense to the comment. “God, sorry! It’s *hard*, okay?”

“ *It’s hard !*” George mocks. “No it’s not, you’re just bad, Dream.”

“Okay, well,” Dream pauses to wheeze. George smiles at hearing his dumb laugh again. “Maybe if you were less of a *baby* about it, it wouldn’t be so bad, you ever consider that?”

“Well, did you ever consider that you’re weird? Like, seriously, who comes over to someone’s house at night time? Not to mention you’ve done it, like, two times now.”

“Is it so hard to believe I just want to hang out with you?” Dream asks, lifting the rag to wipe away the dried blood.

George pauses. “You want to hang out with me.” The sentence was meant as a question, but it ends up just being a blunt statement. “Huh.”

“It’s true.” Dream assures.

George fidgets with his hands in his lap as Dream reaches for the cleaning alcohol. He hears the cap pop off as Dream wets the cloth.

He begins to rub the wound directly, making George pull away with a sharp inhale. “Around! Clean around, please. It stings.”

“Sorry, sorry! I thought it was like water.” Dream laughs.

Dream begins to gently wipe around the wound.

“How did you get hurt?” He asks softly, breaking the silence.

“I already said-”

“Don’t lie.”

George goes quiet for a moment. His heart beats fast, he can hear it in his ears.

“It was a vampire.” He says eventually, making Dream stop cleaning.

“*What?* Oh God, are you okay?”

“Yeah,” George sighed. It was embarrassing to be taken advantage of. “I slipped up. It’s not that bad, I was taking a walk when.. When it happened.” He attempts. Dream seems to buy it.

“I’m sorry.” He says. “Those...those things are awful. I’m glad you’re okay.”

“Eh, I was kinda asking for it.” George smiles. “By walking out in the woods, I mean.” He quickly adds.

“Don’t say that, George. You didn’t deserve... *this*. ” Dream holds the cloth over the wound, gently applying pressure. It felt kind of nice.

George smiles. “You think so?”

“Of course not.” The cloth pulls away, and is replaced by the textured feeling of a bandage. “I can’t imagine if- if I saw someone hurt you like this.” His voice is laced with protectiveness, and George feels safer from hearing him talk like that.

He wonders what Dream would do if he knew that George got hurt like this all the time, what lengths he would go to in order to fight off vampires to keep him safe. George entertained the thought of Dream recklessly yelling at vampires that were after George, completely ignoring his own needs to help him. He might even manage to fight some off for a bit.

“I’m glad you’re here to help, at least. I don’t usually have other people over like this, but I guess it’s not horrible.” George says, a small giggle following after. “Even if you only want to hang out at night. Which, by the way, is super weird.”

“I just think that night is the best time to get to know someone,” Dream reasons. “Um, I’m also at work during the day.”

“Oh? What do you do?”

A pregnant pause. “Butcher.”

“Oh, that’s cool.” George says slowly. He’s not sure what he expected, but it wasn’t a butcher.

“Yup. I’m.. a butcher.”

Dream continues to carefully wrap the gauze around George’s injured shoulder, before tearing the edge with his teeth. He sticks it in place and leans back to admire his handiwork.

George turns around to face him, studying his proud expression. “Well, now time for this one.” He gestures vaguely to the flesh wound in his side.

“Ah, okay.”

George turns slightly, still facing Dream. The taller begins to clean around the wound, now slightly more experienced in first-aid.

“You haven’t killed me yet, so that’s good, I guess.” George teases.

Dream laughs. “No, no...I couldn’t do that. I can’t believe anyone would just...want to kill you-someone like you without thinking.”

“It wouldn’t be that hard, I think.” George says. His tone becomes stale, and before he can talk himself out of it, words spill from his mouth. “Other people don’t worry about someone like me a lot. Not much to miss, because I don’t worry about anyone.” The words sit uneasily in the air.

“So...you would just...disappear?” Dream asks carefully.

Disappear. George grits his teeth as another touch of water cools his wound.

What a scary word. But it was true. “Yes.”

The cloth against George's side slows in its cleaning around the gash. After a moment, Dream continues and takes the cloth away. George could sense how he had made the room uncomfortable with his confession, but honestly didn't care enough to do anything about it. It was a harsh reality that he'd accepted. Every day, he would spend his time in the one place everyone said *not* to go. He honestly expected to simply vanish from existence one day, and nobody would bat an eye.

I wonder if Dream would care enough to come try to find me.

George pushes the thought away, not wanting to think about the possibility of death more than he already had.

Dream suddenly speaks up. "What about, uh, Snapmap, or whatever you said?"

George huffs. "Sapnap. And, well, I dunno. He's an idiot, but I kinda like talking to him I guess. Keeps me sane." It was true, Sapnap was someone he genuinely liked. He'd listened to his emotions an embarrassing amount of times, and still somehow remained so lighthearted when visiting him.

"Well, that's *someone*."

George smiles, and rolls his eyes. "Maybe."

"You know who else is someone?"

George turns his head just enough to look at Dream and raise a brow quizzically. He already knows the answer, but asks anyway. "Who?"

Dream grins at him, and rests his hand at the center of George's back. "Depends. What am I to you?"

George pauses at the question. *What am I to you?* What was he supposed to say? A friend, maybe, but friends didn't flirt with you. And he's *definitely* not saying that he was a boyfriend, God no, George couldn't even think of that. Then what...what *is* Dream?

George smirks. "A mystery." He decides.

Dream laughs and gives him a light shove as he shakes his head. "You're an idiot."

George mirrors his laugh. "You stick around."

There's a moment of silence as Dream wraps the bandages around George's waist, carefully orbiting his torso with the roll of gauze, going beneath his raised arms. He tears it again with his

teeth and tucks the bandage in place.

“Why do you stick around, anyway?” George asks softly.

Nyctophilia

Chapter Notes

I'm excited about this chapter hehe

Warnings for chapter 4: detailed talk of blood, injury, swearing, burn injury

enjoy :D

Why do I stick around?

Dream freezes.

It was a good question. George doesn't really *give* him anything, and while Dream had intended to come here and just get the bite over with, now...

It wasn't that his instincts had dropped, on the contrary, actually. His idea is simple; end the stupid attachment he has to George once he got inside with a swift bite into his skin. Easy.

When he opened the door to see George standing casually with two bleeding injuries, it was surprising that it only made things more difficult.

The overpowering scent of human blood rushed into his nose and sent his brain on a high that made everything else disappear. No doorway, no cool breeze from behind, no dim street lights just barely illuminating George's pale skin. It was just George. George had stood in front of him, a desaturated grey figure, blood staining red to a vibrancy that was sickening.

Dream's tongue moves to speak without his intention, but it seemed his brain had other plans that opposed his heart. While every inch of his body wants to lunge forward and rip and tear and sink into all of that red, he finds he really hates something.

He hates that George is hurt. It was the same feeling he had that night when they met, when he saw the saddening haze glossing over his chocolate eyes, it sunk deep into some part of Dream that he couldn't just brush off.

And somehow, that's something powerful enough to keep him down.

Not by a lot, but it's enough.

Why does he stick around? Was that it? George being hurt? Was it something about how he hated the thought of someone mistreating George when he'd done nothing wrong, but no, not just that, George is a good person. And George deserves more than just to be discarded by the world. George deserves-

George deserves better than that.

"-eam?"

"What?" Dream whips his head up. His heart is in his ears.

"You know you don't *have* to answer, you look like you're gonna explode or something." George giggles lightly. Dream's face heats with embarrassment as George turns around to face him.

"Well, I don't wanna give you an answer that..." *is true*. "...isn't true."

"And I don't want you having a heart attack over deciding what to say." George laughs slyly. "You don't have to say. I don't care."

Thank God.

"So you don't mind if I stay longer?"

Why would I ask that?

George perks up. "Of course not, you're w-welcome in my house as long as you want."

Dream finds himself smiling. "Thank you, George." His voice comes out softer than intended. George smiles back, and they take a moment of just looking at each other. The corners of his eyes have a small pink tint to them, Dream notices. It made his eyes look warmer. George averts his gaze and stands, heading to the white-tiled kitchen behind the couch. He gently slips his right

sleeve back onto his injured shoulder.

“Are you hungry at all?” George asks.

“*God*, yes-” Dream immediately answers out of impulse, and nearly chokes as he stops himself. “No. I mean- no. I’m not hungry.”

George glances at him with an amused expression. “That doesn’t *sound* like you’re not hungry.”

Dream scoffs. “I ate already. I was just...joking.” Dream didn’t know if he could handle the look on George’s face if somehow he realized that Dream’s canine teeth were a little too sharp to be human. That look of...whatever it would be, he couldn’t handle that.

I’m such a coward. He clenches his fists. His nails prick his palm. *A vampire scared of what a human thinks.*

“Alright, just tell me if you want something, mister *I’m not hungry*.” George waves his hands beside himself to emphasize his mocking before leaning down to open a cabinet. Dream decides to stand and walk into the kitchen with George.

The kitchen is tiny, but neat. A couple of pans hang against the wall and a charred rough furnace sits at the end of the room. Racks with cooking utensils hanging on the line the back wall along with some blue wash rags. Some bronze colored pots sat out by the sink.

“What’re you having?” Dream leans his elbows over a chair by the mahogany dining table (with a blue tablecloth, he notices) as he watches George lay out a silver pot and a pre-bought bag of noodles. Dream eyes the pot bitterly.

“Nothing fancy. Just these noodles I got from the market. I eat them a lot.” George confesses. “I usually get home kind of late and don’t have time for anything else.”

“You get home late often? What’s your job, then?”

George turns on the sink faucet and watches the water fill the pot. He doesn’t bother to respond

until after he turns off the water. “I make maps of the area around here. Like- the woods and...stuff.”

“Aren’t people supposed to stay out of the woods? Because of...” Dream gestures to the red seeping through the patches on George’s torso. “You know.”

“I, uh-” George clears his throat. “I have exceptions.”

“Exceptions?” Dream raises a brow. “I dunno why they’d let *you* of all people.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?” George scoffs as he turns to rummage through some of the higher cabinets. “Everyone else here is stupid. Well, mostly. Sapnap’s less stupid.”

“Am I stupid?” Dream asks.

George slowly shuts a cabinet as he considers the question. “Stupid isn’t the right word.”

“What is, then?”

“I dunno, reckless, maybe.” George opens another cabinet, and reaches to the top shelf towards what looks like a container of salt. His fingers brush it just barely, and Dream hears him grunt with dissatisfaction.

Dream took enjoyment in watching the human for a moment. Too short to reach for a seasoning, jumping on the tips of his shoes but only pushing the container further back, it was hilarious. Adorable, even.

Just as he’s about to give up on reaching for the container, George lets out a shocked yelp when he feels a larger chest press to his back. Dream grabs the salt with ease and sets it on the counter, chuckling. He’s careful not to let any get on his hands. “Oh my *god*, you are so short.”

George tries to retaliate, but it comes out as more of a shaky whisper. “I’m not.”

Dream takes notice of his hitched breathing, and smirks. “What’s the matter, Georgie?” He feels

George shiver at the name. He places his palms flat on either side of George, effectively trapping him and leaning in close to his neck. George freezes and looks to his hands on the counter.

“Dream...” His throat burns.

Dream knows he’s pushing it, but he can’t help himself. “You smell so good right now.” His voice is raw, and his lips brush over George’s skin as he speaks.

George nervously exhales, feeling the breath on his neck send goosebumps through his whole body. “Stop fucking with me.”

Dream feels his animalistic instincts ushering him on, being this close to him, a single bite away from taking new blood, blood he had been chasing after for days now. All he has to do is bare his teeth, sink his fangs into him, and it would be over right now. He fantasized about how maybe he could finally taste it, taste that blood he’d been forced to smell in this small house for the past hour. If it smelled so good, how would the flavor be on his tongue?

George shudders under him.

Dream returns to a more conscious state, and blinks. George’s small body trembles slightly against him. And although every muscle in his body resists it, he takes a step back. George leans an elbow on the counter and catches his breath, obviously trying not to show how affected he was.

Dream tugs on the edges of his sleeves. “S-Sorry...about that.”

A beat of silence. “S’okay.” George swallows, and stands up straight. He slowly grabs the container of salt off the counter and turns, gently pushing past Dream and to the furnace where his pot of noodles is. Dream recovers and turns, following him to the furnace.

George pops the cap off of the salt and begins gently shaking it over the steaming noodles. Dream knows he’s staring at George, and he knows that George knows, too. The focus George has on the pot in front of him could shatter a wine glass. His eyes delicately squint under his furrowed eyebrows, and the pink undertones on his cheekbones peek out just a little more prominently than before.

Dream thinks it might be in his best interest to look away before he does something he’d regret.

He has to look away when George eats the noodles. It's disgusting, Dream can't even imagine eating things like that now. That ice cream he'd stomached for George yesterday was one of the worst things he'd ever tasted. Maybe it was the fact that he'd grown so used to blood that anything else just tasted wrong.

"You're sure you don't want anything?" George asks after a while next to Dream, looking up from his bowl.

"Oh, yeah. Yeah, trust me. I'm just fine. Thank you though." He says hastily. It sounds a little too defensive.

"So," George drops his fork- *silver* fork into his now empty bowl. *Does this guy just own silver everything?* "Why did you come by? Before, you know." George nods down to his clothing.

Shit. I didn't prepare an excuse. "I, well..." *You sound nervous. Play off of that.* "I was hoping to maybe go on another...date? But, of course we don't have to do that. You're hurt and- and I don't want you to have to go out like-"

George cuts him off with a mischievous snicker.

"What? What is it?" Dream feels like he was betraying his own personality to let himself stoop to a level of being *nervous* to talk to George. Why was he nervous?

George shook his head and smiled to himself. "It's nothing, just..." His eyes met Dream's. They break him. "What happened to the Dream I met in town square?"

He rolls his eyes, breaking the contact. "Nothing *happened.*"

"You sure?" Dream wants to wipe the stupid grin off of George's face. "You were so much more sure of yourself before. What changed?"

"Nothing changed. Trust me." Dream leans over the table so that only a few inches are left between their faces. He knows he could talk this close without worry of being discovered, since he had dulled his fangs before he came to George's house. "I'm just going easy on you."

George's Adam's apple shifts as he swallows. "Going easy," George echoes. "What makes you think I want that?" His voice is low, words weaving in and out of Dream's own thoughts like a venomous snake that couldn't bite.

Possibilities trickle down Dream's spine dangerously. He holds George's chin firmly in his hand to tilt up to his eye level. George suddenly pales, seemingly regretting his boldness as he averts his gaze.

"There's nobody else here." Dream draws. "I'm gonna do you a favor and pretend like you didn't just say that."

The look on George's face is priceless. That's all he needs.

Dream pulls his hand away and takes George's bowl to the sink, careful to avoid touching the silverware inside.

"Do you want to stay here tonight?" George suddenly blurts out.

Dream turns to him, shocked. "Really?"

You know you couldn't handle that. You'll lose it before morning.

"I...I'd love to. But--"

"Yeah. Cool." George sputters out as he stands. "Is it alright if you sleep on the couch? I uh- I only have my bed."

Dream chuckles. "You're offering to let me stay over when you only have one bed?"

George groans. "Do you want to stay or not?"

"Yeah, yeah, the couch is great. I'd love to stay over, George." He smiles fondly at George. George scoffs and walks to a nearby closet. He rummages around before emerging from it with an armful of blankets and pillows.

“Here.” George says coldly, and drops it without warning onto Dream. Dream doesn’t struggle to hold it at all, though.

Dream walks to the couch and splays all the blankets over it. “Such hospitality, you’d make a great housewife.” He tries to hide the laugh towards the end of his joke, but fails.

“*Housewife?*” George does a full turn around by his bedroom door to look at him with an exasperated face. “What the hell is wrong with you?”

Dream wheezes. “Sorry, sorry, it’s just-” He settles a fit of giggles in his throat. “You offered to cook me something, and then you gave me stuff for sleeping...”

George huffs. “If you’re going to make fun of me you’re more than welcome to go home.”

“No, no! Sorry I’ll be good, I’ll be good.” Dream gives him an innocent smile. “You’re too handsome to be a housewife, anyways.”

George blushes and glares at him as he tries to bite back a smile. “You’re not funny.”

“Oh, I’m *completely* serious, George.”

George rolls his eyes, “Do you need a change?”

“No, I’m fine sleeping in this. But thanks.”

George nods and closes his bedroom door behind him.

He lets out a breath he didn’t know he was holding and trudges into the bathroom to wash up for bed.

He’s just finished dressing when Dream knocks on his bedroom door. He walks over and opens it, meeting the eyes of the blonde. “Everything okay?”

“Yeah, I just wanted to say thank you again for.. Letting me stay over and stuff. I appreciate it.”

“Of course, Dream. I wouldn’t have offered if I didn’t want you here.”

“You want me?” He asks, eyebrows raised.

“Stop.” George says, despite his small smile.

The two of them walk into the living room, where Dream has carelessly strewn the pillows and sheets onto the couch. Looks more like a nest than anything.

“Wake me up if you need anything.” George says, even though he knows he’ll be pissed if he’s woken up.

“Okay. Goodnight, George.”

“Goodnight.”

George walks back to his room, turning briefly to see Dream close all his curtains and flop onto the couch. He closes his bedroom door and lies down, the sheets inviting him to a restful sleep. The knowledge of Dream staying in his house for the night was strange, but strangely comforting. It felt safer.

George awakes with his pillow under his head more sleep-inducing than usual. It was a change from how he usually woke up. He groggily pulls himself out of bed, and washes up for the day.

Sun’s already up. He notices through the blinds of his beside window. He groans at letting himself oversleep.

His mind is half-conscious as he scrubs his teeth and combs his hair for just a few seconds, like usual. Same thing once again, get an early head start, set traps in the woods before vampires notice.

Once he’s changed, he emerges into the living room. His heart leaps for a moment, spotting someone laying on the couch with their feet hanging over the edge and limbs spread unnecessarily, before he remembered he let Dream stay over. He relaxed, letting out a soft exhale and stepping in front of the sofa.

He took the opportunity to admire a still-sleeping Dream, messy and tousled hair falling into his eyes. Tiny rosy freckles are scattered all along the bridge of his nose, fading out into his cheeks. His complexion is nearly flawless, to George.

He steps a little closer to Dream’s sleeping figure, and can hear his soft breath. His skin was a warm color between peach and sand, and the faint speckles across it like the rocks of a beach.

George wonders how it would feel to touch. He blinks, knowing that would be embarrassing as hell if Dream were to wake up.

George turns to open the curtains and light up the room with some sun. He grabs the hem of the curtain before he feels a hand on his, gently stopping him from pulling them open. His heart leaps into his throat as he flinches back.

“Dream!” He spins around to face the taller, who’s standing alarmingly close.

“Sorry,” He laughed softly, voice still heavy with fatigue. It’s cute. “G’morning.”

“Ugh, you scared me. How’d you sleep?”

“Well.” Dream replies simply. His face was relaxed, lacking the obnoxious twinge it usually had. George wondered if he was always like this in the morning, but quickly shoos away the domestic thought.

George smiles fondly, allowing himself to buy into Dream’s current mood. “I’m glad.”

Dream rubs his eyes with one hand, walking away and disappearing into the kitchen. George follows soon after opening the curtains.

Dream sits at the table in the shade, as George begins to open a few blinds in the kitchen and then heads to his pantry. George doesn’t notice the way he avoids the sunlight like the plague.

Dream leans an elbow onto the kitchen table as if he owned it. “So, babe,” George’s fingers clench ever so slightly more around the pantry doorknob. *Nope, he’s still obnoxious as hell.* “What’re we doing today?”

George forces himself to take a normal breath. “What...we? And don’t...w-why did you call me that?” He turns to Dream and makes a noise between a laugh and an exhale.

“Oh, come on. I know you like it.” Dream has a growing smile on his face, his eyes still half-lidded from sleep. George has to swallow the words in his mouth that he couldn’t afford to speak out loud.

“Well...” His face feels too warm to think. It’s not that he *doesn’t* like those things, it’s just...

George giggles to himself as he turns back to the pantry. “Maybe you should say things like that...more often.” He regrets the words immediately as they leave his tongue.

Dream perks up, the tired glaze in his eyes are replaced with newfound interest.

“Is that so?” Dream asks with a frustratingly cocky tone.

George rolls his eyes, though smiling, and grabs some bread jelly for a quick breakfast.

“Whatever makes you happy, Dream.” George’s lack of concentration shows in his badly made toast.

Dream doesn’t respond but he smiles to himself, tracing lines into the wooden table with his fingernail.

George takes a pot off it’s hook on the kitchen wall, filling it with water and setting it down on the heat.

“Want some tea?”

“No, thanks.”

While waiting for the water to boil, George walks out of the kitchen to pack his bag. He packs an array of weapons and tools-- a net, wooden stakes, a musket loaded with silver bullets, and a small pouch of salt. He carefully places metals next to softer items so that it doesn’t make too much noise. He’s just tying the bag closed when he hears a loud hissing sound from the kitchen, accompanied with a yelp.

In an instant, he’s in the doorway. “What happened? Are you okay?”

Dream was clutching his forearm, nodding. “I’m fine, just.. Burned my arm.”

George didn’t question why he wasn’t near the pot. “Dream. Be more careful, please.”

“I’m sorry.” Dream says, voice small and apologetic.

He quickly retrieves a small container of honey and a rag soaked with cold water then sets the pot on the table.

“Can I?”

Dream nods and offers his arm to George, who gently takes it into his tender hands. He applies the cold water to the wound, then spreads a thin layer of honey on the skin. He can feel Dream’s eyes on him while he works at the burn, but he doesn’t want to look up and check in case they lock eyes. Dream doesn’t lower his gaze.

George takes the boiling water from the pot and pours it into a mug, dropping in a handmade tea bag. He sits down next to Dream to drink the tea.

“Aren’t you hungry?” George asks, after a few minutes.

“Huh? Oh. Um..” He thinks, for a moment. “I’m okay. Thanks.”

“Are you sure?” George’s voice softens.

Dream nods, seemingly more confident now.

“Okay. Well, I’m going to work, for the day.. You’re free to stay here while I’m out, make yourself at home. The market has plenty of food if nothing here suits you. You’re sure you don’t need anything to eat now..?”

“Mhm. Thank you, again. I hope you have a good day at work.” Dream eyes him, expression unreadable and almost unsettlingly blank.

“Thanks. I’ll be back by evenfall.” George offers a smile, before walking out into the room by the front door. He shoulders his bag and steps out of the house with his gear.

George sighs in exhaustion as he locks the door behind him.

“Thank god.” He breathes to himself. It hadn’t been a very successful day of hunting, he’d only spotted two vampires and caught none. They were getting smarter, word of a vampire hunter in the Anderrige woods definitely had to be common knowledge to vampires by this point. It made it a hell of a lot more difficult to keep up with their tricks.

He unties his boots’ laces and sets them neatly by the doorway and sets his battered jacket on the coat rack as he makes his way into his house, already looking forward to a good night of rest.

Wonder what Dream has been up to while I was gone. George ponders, and considers that Dream probably would be gone by now, anyways. Who would stay in someone’s house alone for a whole day with nothing to do?

He turns the corner into his living room, and stops in his tracks.

There was an amalgamation of blankets, curtains, chairs, a table and a couch all thrown together

into some form of what looked like...honestly, it looked like an enormous blanket fort for children.

“What the f-”

“GEORGE!” Dream’s voice rang excitedly, and George looked over as he shuffled out from under a hanging quilt. His eyes are full of joy. “You’re back, finally! I was getting bored.”

“What the hell did you *do?!* ” George sputters. “M-My breakfast table! My extra blankets, what you covered my windows in my spare bed sheets!”

“It was too bright! You said to make myself at home.”

“I didn’t mean to *tear apart the place*, bloody hell!”

“I didn’t *tear apart the place*, calm down.” Dream rolls his eyes and smiles. “Come in, it’s roomy!” Dream sits up only for his head to push against a blanket above him. It definitely wasn’t big enough for him.

“Oh my god- no! I have to clean this up, it’s everywhere, the couch is on the wrong side of the room, there’s chairs upside down-”

“George, George, hey,” George stops in his ramblings at hearing his name so softly. He forgot how Dream sounded when he said it. “Stop thinking about later, calm down. Come sit.” He pats a place on the rug next to him.

George squints at him critically, but sighs in defeat. His cheeks tingle with embarrassment as he crouches down and crawls under the quilt to sit next to Dream with his knees to his chest.

“Well? What do you think?”

George makes eye contact with him. Even after just a day of not seeing Dream, it was easy to forget how soft his face looked despite his rather intimidating presence. “This is childish.” George snickers as Dream pushes him lightly on the shoulder.

“Aww, I’m sad now. You’re so mean, George.” Dream whines sarcastically.

“Yeah, yeah, you’re lucky I’m too tired to clean all this up now.”

“Busy day, huh?” Dream asks as he leans a little closer. This fort was way too small for the both of them. “You didn’t get hurt again, did you?”

“No, no, I’m fine.” George raises his hands defensively. “Just a boring day, I suppose.”

“Okay, good, good. Boring is better than scary and dangerous.”

Scary and dangerous is the story of my life. “I guess it is.” George responds, grabbing a cushion and tucking it under his chin, wrapping his arms around it. He sighs, closing his eyes. “Long day, that’s for sure.”

“Yeah?”

“Yeah.”

“Well, maybe you can stay for a few minutes.” Dream says, draping a small woolen blanket across their laps.

“I mean, I guess so.” George says, the sentence fading into a whisper. He’s already falling asleep to the sound of Dream’s voice.

Dream takes hold of one of his hands, immediately bringing George back to full consciousness, pink spreading across his face like wildfire. “Make any new maps?” He asks quietly.

“Yeah, up north.” George breathes, refusing to make eye contact. He let his eyes drift to their intertwined hands.

“Sounds nice.” Dream says. “We should go sometime.”

“Maybe.”

There’s a period of silence, but it’s comfortable. It reminds George of when they danced together during their first encounter. He fights the urge to lay across Dream’s lap and fall asleep right then and there.

He closes his eyes once again and lets the music fabricated in his mind drift and dance around his myriad thoughts. Despite being such an idiot, Dream had an aura about him that made him want to throw all his hesitance away and just hold onto him for dear life. But the response would almost certainly be mockery. And even if it was joking, George knew it would hurt him too much to let go of.

“I um.. I guess I should head to bed now. It’s been a long day, if you don’t mind.” George smiles, letting go of Dream’s hand. He immediately misses the warmth. He crawls out from under the fort, smiling.

“Aww, you’re not gonna sleep in here with me?” Dream pouts, wrapping the wool blanket around his torso.

George misses a breath. “Oh- n-no. No, I’m not doing that. I’ll stick to my bed, thanks.”

“Okayyy, fine.” Dream says. “A-And I can clean this all up if you want.”

“Don’t bother.” George stands. “If it makes you comfortable, then why not.”

“Really?” Dream looks up at him like an excited dog. It was stupidly adorable. “Thanks, George.”

“Sure thing. If you’re going to be staying for a bit, I suppose I should get used to it.” *I just implied that he’s going to stay here for longer. I’m gonna drive myself crazy if I have to deal with his...whatever he does to me every day.*

“Goodnight, George.” Dream gives him another big grin before standing up to plop himself down on the couch at the edge of the fort. His eyes were already shut.

“G’night.” George says softly. A little too soft, way more than he intended for it to come out.

He walks over to his bedroom, drowsily changes into his sleep clothes, and falls asleep the moment his head hits the pillow.

Dream’s eyelids pry open to faint moonlight beams cascading across a wood boarded ceiling. His body aches with an emptiness, similar to the feeling of being stuck under a pile of sand and unable to reach the nearest water. The couch registers under his touch as he blinks himself more awake, the texture is slightly itchy and plush as he curls his fingers into lazy fists. His thoughts are mere concepts that stumble around in his head, and are unable to make any fraction of a complete thought. The silent air around him feels unusual with the absence of rustling leaves and noisy tree creatures.

His stomach suddenly twists and aches unlike he’d ever felt before, and begging him to stand. He groans as he rolls on his side, making the couch creak slightly while holds himself in an enclosed huddle.

Hungry. Fuck, I’m so, so hungry.

His stomach growls audibly. The familiar rush of adrenaline spreads through his body, forcing him awake. Before he even realizes it, he’s standing up and shambling away from the couch. He hadn’t eaten properly in days, it was really catching up with his body now. The soft shuffle of his feet over the carpet hardly reaches his awareness as he lifts his head upwards. His arms cross into each other and leave him hunched over, holding his aching body. His body feels so empty that it feels as if a simple flick could make him stumble over.

His vision becomes a mixture of a starved blur and drowsiness. He inhales for a few long seconds through his nose. He smells it.

Blood. It's close. So close, in the same house, even. Without a thought, his body makes its way towards the sweet smell. His mouth waters. It had been so long, *too* long, without any blood to drink.

The saccharine scent grows stronger as he pushes open a doorway, and his overly focused pupils land at a bed against the wall of the room. All memories and experiences from Dream's life become irrelevant in the face of his impulses. He walks to the edge of the bed.

Though Dream recognizes George laying under the sheets, who was now shifting back and forth due to the emitting moonlight from the open doorway, it doesn't reach his conscious mind.

The bed dips slightly as Dream sits down on its edge, continuing to keep his eyes fixed on George. His deep brown locks splay out onto the pillow scarcely by his forehead, his cotton white pajama shirt exposes some of his collarbone, and his skin looks smooth and soft. Perfectly open for fangs.

George's eyes flutter open. After a few blinks, his eyes suddenly look fully awake.

"Dream?" George mumbles in confusion. "I-I thought I told you that I'm not sleeping in that fort with you." Dream doesn't hear much more than some incomprehensible syllables.

"C'mere." Dream murmurs. George's eyes widen as Dream leans onto his bed to lay next to him and wrap his arms around his torso.

George sputters. "Wh-what are you-"

Dream pulls George's chest to his own, and buries his face into George's neck. He was right; his skin is soft.

"Dr-Dream, what...?" Dream can feel the human's quick heart rate thump in his ribcage.

Dream can smell the blood under his nose, under George's skin. His grip tightens on George's shirt

as the heavenly smell of human blood fills his lungs. His core intention urges him to bite down.

His lips part over George's neck, and he allows himself to hover over his skin with shallow breaths that make George melt more into his hold.

"Okay...okay." George exhales a light giggle. "Are you- can I-"

"Mine." Dream mumbles into George's neck. George swallows. Dream can feel the blood rushing to his face, causing him to become warmer.

Dream lays unmoving for a moment.

The smell of blood overpowers all of his senses and drown him in starvation. He allows his teeth to peek out between his lips.

And then, there's a gentle touch at the nape of his neck. He stops.

The fingers are timid and delicate as they pause for a moment, then brush upwards into his hair, and begin lightly combing it back and forth.

Dream closes his mouth. He finds himself feeling hot.

The combing stops. "Sorry." George mutters.

"No," Dream replies. With a weird combination of subconscious and instinct, he wraps his legs around George's and pulls him so that there is no space between their bodies anymore. He's too slumbersome to acknowledge any of his actions, and whether his intentions are his own or not. "Mine."

The silence becomes deafening for a few, tense seconds.

Then, arms wrap around him in return. They hold around his broad back tentatively, but somehow self-assured as well.

The beast in Dream's ribcage settles, and is no longer clawing around for a scrap of food. Instead, he allows himself to trail a hand up and down George's back. He feels the human's shoulder blades relax.

As Dream feels arms pull him closer, his subconscious begins to fade into his waking mind.

George's soft, fluffy, dark hair under his fingers, the beating of a heart that felt miniscule against his own slow heart rate, and the chin ducking into his hair all became all too real to Dream at once.

What. The. Hell.

His tongue feels stale in his mouth as he feels the need to explain himself, but just as he's about to speak up, a tender hand reaches to his bicep, trailing over it. The fingertips were warm. And now, Dream felt warm, too.

I'm laying in the same bed with a human. With George.

Dream scolds himself for the heat growing on his face and ears. *What has my life come to?*

George's arms were more toned than Dream had expected. His delicate fingers in his hair were so gentle, but firm. His breath was shallow, almost as if he was afraid of breathing too heavily to ruin the moment.

Maybe I should leave. I could just lose it if I wake up again, and I'll bite him. I almost just did.

I don't deserve to be this close to him.

George's breaths became deeper, and the hand around Dream's back fell limp over him.

But maybe...

Maybe I can do this just once. I can let myself have whatever this is.

The Book of Promise

Chapter Notes

hey there! i hope everyone's enjoying the story :D just wanted to let you guys know that we're in the process of writing the book so this is about as far as we got with complete chapters. its possible we wont be posting a chapter next week, and possibly the week after that. we want to make sure each chapter is refined so its gonna take some time, please bare with us! anyway, leave comments if you want! I love reading them >:) this is a pretty long chapter

Warnings for chapter 5: swearing, arguing, brief mention of torture

enjoy :D

Dream's body is heavy with comfort when he drifts into some semblance of awakesness. The cool sheets of George's mattress welcome him, and before he can question why he's not on the couch, the thought hits him. *Oh right.* Dream looks down at his own hands, afraid of what they could've done if he hadn't kept enough control last night. *That happened.*

The cozy little bedroom is warm thanks to good insulation, and it's certainly welcomed to Dream, who was so used to sleeping in the cold, windy, or muddy forest, the only protection from the elements being his attempts at houses in high tree branches. It didn't do much.

Falling asleep next to someone was a nice change, too. Even if it was for a bad reason.

George. Dream whips his body to a sitting up position as he notices the vacant bed. *Did he leave?* He runs a hand over the space where he remembered the human laying before, and it still radiated lightly with warmth. He must've recently gotten up. He wouldn't leave, right?

A clink of dishes against a counter sounds from the house. Dream sighs with relief. *Okay. He's still here.*

Now the problem is - how is he going to explain all of last night away? If George is still here, he must not look too obvious yet to be hungry, he should still have his normal pupils at least for the time being. That would take a *long* time of not eating to happen.

Dream tries to ignore the clenching of his stomach at the thought of food again. *I'm gonna need to*

do something about that eventually.

But right now, he has to decide on how to approach George. Dream had indirectly done himself a huge favor by being naturally flirty, even if it was a little harder to keep it up now that George must be getting suspicious. He could easily explain away his clinginess as flirting, yeah, George didn't have to know. He'd believe that. If he didn't, well...

Dream doesn't want to consider the thought.

He crawls out of bed and walks into the hall, entering the living room, lingering a hand over the door frame as he passes it.

He walks behind the couch, where George is seated with a leather notebook in hand. His hair sticks up just above the back cushion.

"Boo."

George flinches, and turns to face him. He cracks a smile, turning back around and setting the notebook on the coffee table. "Oh. Good morning." His tone is more pleasant than Dream expected. That was a good sign.

"Good morning." Dream says, leaning back against the counter.

"You were cuddly last night." George says calmly, his back still turned away from Dream.

Dream's tongue is caught in his throat. "Sorry about that." He laughs a little in an attempt to mask his fear. *Is his calmness sourcing from accusation, or confidence?*

"I didn't move away." George smiles mischievously back at him. "You seemed to like that."

Dream's face was on fire. *It's definitely confidence.* "I- yeah." George was probably the only human in the world that could make him feel like *he* was the prey. He hates the times when George knows the effect he has on him. Dream isn't sure how he feels about being vulnerable to a human like that. "Did you like it?"

George stands. "If I didn't, I would have left."

Curiosity trickles down Dream's spine. "So you do like me, then?"

George pauses, and grins. "I like you more than other people."

“Is that so?”

“Don’t push your luck, idiot.”

Dream chuckles. George is all talk until someone talks back. It’s hilarious.

George starts to take ingredients out of his cabinet, setting them on the counter. “Want some breakfast?”

Dream swallows. “I, um..”

Dream grits his teeth at the thought of having to stomach another human meal. But he’s *starving*, he knows George will question how he hasn’t eaten in numerous days. He needs to get food in his system.

Maybe it won’t be so bad.

“Yeah, sure.”

“You’ll need to eat well if you wanna get big and strong, you know. Didn’t your mom ever teach you that?”

“I’m already big and strong. And.. no.” Dream says, with an uncomfortable laugh.

George doesn’t seem to notice, as he lays out some popcorn kernels and a tall bottle of milk on the counter along with some silverware and ceramic bowls. It looks like he’s done it a million times.

“Is popcorn cereal okay?”

“...Y-Yeah, that sounds great.” Dream says, nodding slightly. He actually did know what popcorn cereal was, though it was a far off and faint memory.

One full of compassion and unreachable safety he’d never feel again.

How am I going to eat without silverware? I’ll get burned.

“Great.” George takes a bronze pot off the wall and begins to meticulously prepare the popcorn.

Dream enjoys watching him work, leaning to rest his head on his fist. Though it was a rather simple meal he was making, it was a skill nonetheless. Dream hadn't learned to cook much, for obvious reasons, so seeing the extent humans would go to just to prepare a breakfast was fascinating to him. So much effort for so little satisfaction.

"You can help you now." George rolls his eyes, feigning annoyance.

"Oh, right." Dream smiles sheepishly, standing to help make the popcorn.

They pour the oil in the pot, dumping the kernels into it. George takes the lid off the wall and places it on top with a sigh. "Should be a few minutes."

He leans against the counter beside Dream, crossing his arms. The blonde snickers, looking down on the top of George's head. Did he comb it every morning?

George feels the stare on him and locks his eyes skeptically with him. "What?"

"Nothing, you're just short."

"Ugh, not this again." George drags his palm down his face with an annoyed eye roll.

Dream places a large but gentle hand on top of the other's head, running two fingers through his hair. George stops before he can get out another annoyed comment, breathing softly. His tensed face relaxes, his eyebrows raise slightly as all annoyance seems to fade away. Dream swears he feels George lean into the touch of his hand the slightest bit. It's so subtle he's not sure if he imagined it or not.

He lifts his hand, and the moment is gone as quickly as it arrived. Dream blinks rapidly. *Did he enjoy that?* George looks to his tiled floor, and is very obviously avoiding looking up. Dream can't help the light giggle that bubbles in his throat. George looks up again.

"*What?* What is with you?" George says with his own subtle laugh.

"You're- you're like a cat or something."

"What? How?"

Dream rests his hand on George's hair again, and ruffles it a little. George smiles nervously and even dips his head a little, before swatting his hand away.

"Don't do that!"

"I told you! You might as well have, like, purred or something-"

George rolls his eyes and turns his attention back to the pot. "You're imagining things."

“Fine, fine, I’m so sorry that you like when I touch your hair.”

George kicks him in the leg. It doesn’t hurt, but he pretends it does anyways.

Within a few minutes, the popcorn is finished. George removes the lid and lets the steam out of the pot. Dream takes a seat at the mahogany breakfast table he’d grown familiar with, and George sets two bowls out for the both of them. George digs in immediately, but Dream, of course, hesitates.

The fluffy, yet firm popcorn sits in the bowl in front of him as if it were taunting him. His stomach growls again. Dream flicks his eyes back up at George, who was still eating from his own bowl without paying much attention. *His blood would taste so much better than this. If only I had the guts to do it.*

He sighs, and picks up a single popped kernel between his index and thumb fingers. *Maybe it won’t be that bad? Better than nothing, I guess.*

Dream caves, and places it in his mouth. He chews once. *It’s not...that bad?* He chews again, and the flavor spreads on his tongue. He gags.

Nevermind.

Dream’s eyes look up from his bowl and across the table, where George had a hand over his mouth as if he was trying not to laugh at him. *Shit. He’s looking.* Dream tightens his lips, and forces himself to swallow the popcorn. He shivers.

And George bursts out in laughter.

Dream holds his hands out beside himself defensively. “What?”

George smacks a hand on the table in his fit of giggles. “You looked like- hah! You looked like you were going to throw up or something.”

“I-” Dream stammers. “Sorry? Actually- no how the hell do you eat this shit?!”

“Do you really not like it? You’re totally overreacting.” George rolled his eyes. “It’s just popcorn and milk.”

“It’s fucking *gross* is what it is.”

“Maybe if you used your silverware like a normal person instead of picking it up with your hands-”

“I like it better that way!” Dream says defensively. “Spoons were a stupid invention. One more

thing to clean along with your bowl.”

Dream leans back into his chair a little more as George stands to open the curtains by the table. Golden light spills over the tiles and part of the table. Dream opens his mouth to protest, but immediately closes his mouth realizing it'd make himself more suspicious than he already was. He scoots away from the sunshine.

“You sure you don't want anything? You must be hungry- actually, did you even have dinner last night?” George asks as he takes his and Dream's dishes to the sink.

“Yeah,” Dream lies. “I had a really big dinner last night. At the butcher shop, we- we were given a big dinner after I worked some. So I'm still good, no need to worry.”

“If you say so,” George shrugs. *Thank God he believes me.*

“Don't you need to work today, too?” Dream stands, and takes a quick path around the rectangle of light on the floor to sit on the arm of the couch in the living room.

George thinks for a moment before responding. “I kind of, like, work on my own schedule you could say. I was gonna take the day off and just work a little from home if that's fine with you.”

Dream smiles, and watches George place the now cleaned dishes back into their respective wooden cabinets.

“Couldn't get enough of me after last night, huh?”

“You-” George whips to face him with an angry look. Dream starts laughing hysterically and falls back onto the couch with a thump. After he calms his giggles enough he hears George mutter “-not funny.”

Dream sits up properly and turns to watch as George pulls some large papers out of a bag, presumably his maps from work. “It's a little funny.”

“You don't have to rub it in, you know.” George slaps a map onto the table harshly. “Sorry I can't just fuck around and brush it all off afterwards like you do.”

Dream's smile disappears. *Oh. That's what he thinks of it- ugh, of course he does. I should've known he would blame himself.*

“George,” Dream’s voice is soft, but stern. George looks up hesitantly. His eyes have that same sorrow Dream had become so familiar with, even with the sun illuminating his face in a honey color and making his eyes glitter, they’re dark with something that Dream wishes he could just get rid of. He hates the thought of something burdening George. What could George have ever done to deserve anything bad in his life? Who the hell could hurt someone so innocent? “I didn’t mean it like that, honest.” He finishes.

The stress lines on George’s face soften. “But you do mean it like that. Even if you don’t mean for it to.”

“What? What do you mean?” *I haven’t hurt him somehow, have I?*

“Why would you do that last night, Dream?” George asks, voice waving between shyness and frustration. “I can’t tell if you- if you like me or if you hate me. Please just tell me, which one is it?”

Dream is shocked into silence. *He thinks I hate him. What the fuck have I done?* “George, oh my god, I do *not* hate you-”

“Then how do you feel?” George’s voice wavers slightly. He places both hands on the table as he leans over it. “Are you just toying with me? You think it’s funny to see me get red because of a guy? We could get in trouble for whatever this is, you know.”

“No- oh my god, George listen! Listen to me!” Dream raises his voice slightly, which seems to catch George’s attention. Dream lets the gentleness return to his tone. “I would *never* do that to you, okay? That’s not- that’s horrible. I wouldn’t do that. I swear.”

George looks down. He slowly sits down in the chair beside him. “But you don’t like me, do you?” He says monotonously.

Dream freezes. *Like? Of course I like him. But someone as put together and thoughtful as George being into me, actually into me, that’s...*

George is a human.

And I’m a vampire.

That relationship sounds like it’d be torture.

Dream finally sighs, not wanting to give the answer he knows George is anticipating. “I-I *do* like you George, I-”

Knock knock.

Their conversation is interrupted at possibly the most inconvenient time possible. Dream stands in an effort to not let their talk go unfinished, but George walks towards the front door before Dream can stop him. “I’ll get it.” He says emptily. It hurts to hear the pain behind it. The universe really had it out for Dream, didn’t it?

The person that George opens the door to is a tan ravenette, slightly taller than George, and is dressed in what appears to be roughed-up work clothes, including a black and white flannel shirt and grey cargo pants. He smiles at George as he welcomes himself in. “George! My man.”

Dream grimaces at the change in tone that the man was unaware of. It was a little relieving, though. At least he was saved from having to explain himself any further. Dream walks up enough to make his presence known and meets eyes with George.

“Who-”

“Sap, meet Dream. He’s been, uh, staying here for a bit.” George’s words get more like a whisper towards the end of his sentence.

Sapnap makes an overly dramatic shocked expression, jaw dropped and all. “Dude. No. Way.” He immediately walks up to Dream and takes a hand in both of his with a firm shake, catching him a bit off guard. “*The Dream?* Oh my god, George wasn’t kidding about how damn hot you are.”

“*Sapnap!*” George fumes.

Dream’s shocked, but he chuckles and covers his smile with a hand as George pulls Sapnap away from him. Even with the lingering tensy in the air, Dream can’t help himself but to tease George. “Really? Wowww, George.”

“Don’t say a word, idiot.” George scolds. “I’m gonna go get my southeast forest map, don’t say any more dumb shit.”

“Whatever you say, Gogy.” Sapnap scoffs.

Sapnap was a character for sure. Obviously the jokester type, but not in a bad way that Dream would normally find annoying. His stature was more similar to Dream’s, the lack of height made up for with broad shoulders. His clothes looked worn with use, and the smell of lumber radiated from them familiarly. Dream was pleased that there was no scent of burnt wood on him. Forest

fires are horrible to be stuck in the middle of.

“Nice to meet you, man.” Sapnap says once George disappears into another room. His tone is much more friendly rather than sarcastic like when he first came in. “You’re a lot taller than I expected.”

“Yeah?” Dream huffs lightly, analyzing the difference between their heights. It’s about the same as him and George’s. “Well, I hope that’s not a bad thing.”

“No,” Sapnap shrugs. “But George’s neck must hurt though from looking up so much. Of course he’d make friends with a giant of all people.”

“I’m not a giant,” Dream chuckles, eased by the inviting friendly banter Sapnap provides. “Everyone else is just a midget.”

Sapnap furrows his brows with an evil smirk. “Could a midget do this?”

Before Dream has a chance to even process the sentence, a finger flicks him on the forehead hard enough to even hurt *him* a little bit.

“Hey!” Dream yells. Sapnap laughs mischievously, and runs to the table with a map and utensils already laid out. Dream laughs and plays along with the dumb chase, even if he was genuinely a little annoyed that a human just flicked him in the head like he was just someone to be fooled with. He stumbles to a stop before he runs right into a window’s stream of light, and thankfully Sapnap is too busy with hiding under the table to notice.

“What the hell did I just say?” George asks exasperatedly. Dream turns to see George walking up to them with a large beige sheet rolled under one of his arms and an inking pen and cartridge in the other hand. “Why is he- Sapnap why are you under the table?”

“He started it!” Dream immediately accuses, pointing a finger at the defensive ravenet, who was now crawling out of his hiding spot.

“He called me short!” Sapnap whines.

George blinks hard, and runs a slow hand from his temple and into his hair with a groan. “I don’t care, just- oh my god.” Both Dream and Sapnap giggle like children at George’s mumblings, as Sapnap crawls out from under the table. Sapnap even nudges Dream to offer him a fist bump, a fucking *fist bump*. Who does that?

He gives Sapnap a fist bump.

George pushes past the laughing pair unapologetically and lays the new map over the one from earlier, and holds the edges down using some thick books that rested on the kitchen shelf.

“Okay, Sapnap you’ve been in this area, right?” George lays a hand at the top of the map. But Sapnap is still distracted and is having some sort of finger fight with Dream on the table’s edge. George swats at his hand. “Sapnap.”

“What?” Sapnap groans. Dream takes the opportunity to jab a finger at Sapnap’s palm, which results in their dumb game devolving back into childish flicking and each other’s hands. They both laugh uncontrollably, and George groans.

“Guys!” George raises his voice a little louder than he meant to, and causes the other two to stop their banter immediately and look at him. After a couple seconds of shocked silence, Sapnap snickers.

“Shh, you’re so *loud*.” Sapnap pouts.

“I’ve never heard you that loud before.” Dream muses. “Maybe I should fight with people more often.” Sapnap shoves him lightly in the shoulder at that.

George rolls his eyes and points to the same place on the map. “Sap. I need your help mapping this area.”

Sapnap actually settles down, and takes a considering look at the carefully drawn outlines of tree masses and bodies of water. The whole map was rather impressive, if Dream was honest. He recognized many of the areas roughly, though some parts of the woods that were drawn out he tended to avoid due to the tendency for large masses of people to roam, which was always bad news for a lone vampire. He’d come away from the areas with scars once, and had learned his lesson since.

An hour or so passes. The mapmaking process seems to bore Dream pretty quickly, so he opts to bother the pair while they try to work, which George isn’t a fan of. Sapnap doesn’t seem to have a problem with it, often getting sidetracked and conversing with Dream.

He appears to zone out a little at one point, having sat down next to George to watch.

Sapnap traces a small circle on the paper, “Here’s where the lake should go.”

“Shouldn’t it be closer to these trees?” Dream chimes in suddenly, pointing at a section of the map.

“No, no, that’s over here. Look.” Sapnap points to a place a few inches away from where Dream was pointing. “The lake is farther than that.”

“What makes you so sure?” Dream challenges. *As if a human knows the forest better than a vampire, what a joke.*

“Uh, I’ve lived here my *whole life*, aren’t you new?” Sapnap asks.

Dream considers a couple responses. “I...get around.”

Sapnap chuckles and casually places a hand on Dream’s bicep. “Yeah, with arms like that I’m sure you get around plenty.” They make eye contact, and the look on Sapnap’s face is so overdramatically flirtatious that Dream scrunches his nose up at it, but finds that he smiles at it, too. Maybe it was a *little* funny. Sapnap muffles a chuckle, and then they both burst out into hysterical laughter.

“Sapna- oh my-” George grumbles, swatting him on the shoulder lightly causing his raven haired friend to hold his arm in mock-hurt.

“*What?*” Sapnap whines. “You know I’m kiddin’ around, Gogy.”

George doesn’t grace him with a glance upwards. “Don’t call me that.”

Dream manages to open his eyes in the midst of his laughter. “Oh please, as if you’d have a chance with *me*, Sap.”

Dream notices George’s gaze flickers up to watch him as he speaks. He guesses his nonchalance got the brunet’s attention. Interesting.

“I’ll have you know I’m like, super attractive, and out of your league.” Sapnap dramatically brushes his black bangs to the other side of his face.

“Oh yeah, my bad.” Dream grows an evil grin at the spark of an idea. *Wonder how George will react to this, then.* “Let’s kiss.” Dream says with the wave of a hand. The two keel over the table in cackles and wheezes as if it was the funniest thing they’d ever heard.

Through squinted vision, Dream notices George put his head in his hands and lean over the table on his elbows, and though initially concerned, Dream quickly turns smug after seeing the twinge of frustration in his eyes. “What is it, George?” He pushes.

George huffs. “Ugh, nothing. Let’s just keep working.”

“Hm. Alright.” Dream smiles.

Maybe it wasn't the smartest idea to be pushing George like this after hearing a semi-confession from him, about liking him, or whatever. God, why did he have to use such vague wording? *Like* could mean so many different things. But even with that knowledge, it almost makes Dream want to test it to find out what George meant.

Dream looks over at his new dark haired human friend. *Good day to have someone over so I can test this out.*

If George doesn't react at all, then nothing changes. If he becomes jealous, well, that's a lot of teasing material at Dream's disposal.

And that was a hell of a lot of motivation for him.

“How about we compromise,” Sapnap offers with the wave of a hand to the paper. “We'll put it halfway.”

Dream refocuses his attention back on the carefully etched layout, and squints. “I *know* I'm right, but fine. Let's put it there.” Dream reaches for the pen at the opposite end of the table by George, and receives a surprisingly harsh smack to his hand. “Hey, what the-!” Dream gasps angrily as he pulls his hand back, throwing an annoyed look at Sapnap, who's failing miserably to cover up his snickering.

“I'm not letting you mess up my work.” George takes the feathered pen between his fingers as if it were the most precious item in all the world. He leans over the table with no consideration for Dream's personal space, causing him to lean away in surprise as George begins lining out a body of water. “I'll draw it, thanks.”

“Damn, pushy much.” Sapnap chuckles, probably in an attempt to lighten the tone from where George had left it. The ravenet kicks back in his chair with his boots resting on the table, away enough from the map to not be told off for it. “Ughhh, I'm beat. I don't know how you do this all day.” Sapnap groans, and shuts his eyes.

“I like it.” George says lightly. “It feels nice to know where things are, to me that's how it is. It makes me feel safer.”

“Yeah, I guess you’ll know better routes for running away n’ stuff.” Sapnap agrees. Dream looks over at him with a new sparked interest. Sapnap stretches his arms out to his sides dramatically, and lets them fall over the chair’s back. “I guess you’re not the one that’s running, though.”

Dream tilts his head in confusion. He looks over at George, who has a death glare set on Sapnap across the table. When he doesn’t hear a reply to his words, Sapnap opens his eyes to meet George’s brutal gaze, and laughs to himself. “*What?*” As if a switch had been flipped, Sapnap’s cocky grin drops in an instant and his eyes widen. Dream swears he sees George glance over at him. Sapnap clears his throat. “Oh, yeah. I mean the routes you make are safe. So. You won’t be running. The a-animals that hear you- they’d run. That’s right.”

Dream looks between them both, the two obviously having a silent conversation that he wasn’t meant to hear. *What are they talking about? Does George have a vampire bounty on him or something? Does he get chased often?*

“Yup,” George deadpans. Dream considers maybe making a snide remark about being excluded from whatever the two were saying, but decides against it telling from how George probably still isn’t in the best mood. Dream might like to push him, but he’s not a complete asshole. He decides to try and lighten the mood.

“So...where’s your favorite place to go, George? On this map, I mean.”

Thankfully, George takes the opportunity to change the topic just as eagerly. “Oh, I’m glad you asked.” George beams, and points to a mostly blank area of the page. “You already know about this spot, the one we went to when we- during our outing. The park.”

“I think he means date.” Sapnap whispers into Dream’s ear much too loudly for it to actually be unheard. George glares at him, and smacks Sapnap lightly on the arm when he stifles laughter. “Hey! Rude.”

“This other spot, though,” George ignores him. “This place is really nice, too.” George trails a finger down the paper closer to himself, and lands at a carefully detailed area, the individual trees more drawn out and water waves a little more detailed in the river drawn next to the tiny clearing. “There’s a natural waterfall, and flowers in the spring.” Dream looks up at George, who’s still focused on the map in front of him. His smile looks so relaxed. It was rare to see him so untroubled.

“Sounds like a good spot for some *kissy-kissy* action.” Sapnap chuckles, obviously knowing of the mood he was creating in the room. While George looks exasperated, Dream takes advantage of it.

“Oh, you’re so right, Sappy.” Dream drawls with a lean closer to him, George flinching up at the pet name. “You have such a good eye for pretty things.”

Sapnap is a little taken back at first, but quickly adjusts to fire right back. “Exactly, you’re soooo pretty, Dream.” Sapnap winks dramatically at him and tries to bite his lip, but starts smiling which causes him to lose the persona halfway through and puts a hand on the table to keep his balance through the laughter. “I can’t- I can’t do it, oh my god, I’m sorry.”

“So mean to me.” Dream mockingly pouts.

“Dream.” George’s dull tone breaks the laughter, and both boys look over at him curiously. “Can I have a word with you?” His words are devoid of emotion, they are simply spoken as the blond and brunet make eye contact. There was no clear emotion on his face, but that almost made it more concerning.

Sapnap straightens his posture immediately. “George, I- you know I’m just-“

“I know.” George says monotonously. He stands, and walks to his room without a second glance back, as if he knew Dream would follow him. To be fair, that’s exactly what he did.

Dream sends a look of “*I don’t know either*” to Sapnap as he pushes his chair back to follow, and meets George in his room with nonchalant steps. George doesn’t acknowledge him as he enters, and closes the door behind Dream before turning to face him directly.

“What are you *doing*?”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

George sighs lightly, letting go of his shoulders. “This, *this* is what makes me feel like you hate me.”

Dream’s attitude quickly shifts. “What?”

“Why do you keep flirting with Sapnap..?” George asks with a hint of hurt behind his voice. His head ducks a little away from him, and looks instead to the bookshelf on the wall.

Dream smirks. *Knew it. Jealousy.* “What? Flirting?” He says incredulously. Dream leans against the wall and casually analyzes his nails. “I’m just making conversation.”

George abruptly pokes a finger to Dream’s chest, causing the taller man to stagger a step back in surprise. “You know *exactly* what you’re doing.” George hisses. “I’m not having any of it. As much as you like to pretend that- that it all means nothing-”

“All of what?” Dream asks, unamused.

“You might treat it all as a joke, but I think you *like* it. And you think by doing this you’re gonna get to me.” George smiles to himself as he speaks, leaning closer to Dream with each word. “You’re sick, you know that? You’re awful.”

Dream is stunned by the sudden anger in George’s tone. George didn’t seem to be one for confronting conflict, he always avoided talking about a problem through passive aggressive remarks or lightening jokes. This must’ve bothered him enough to surpass all that, then. Dream glares down at him. “Why don’t you just tell me to leave, then? C’mon, you *know* I deserve to be kicked out. Just say it already.”

George winces at Dream’s harsh wording. “I-I can’t do that.”

“Why? Why not, George? You have every reason to!” Dream looms over him and places his hands on George’s shoulders firmly. “Just say it already!”

“I can’t!” George cries, and pushes Dream off of him. Before Dream can push back, the swelling frustration in his chest fizzles out at the sound of a quiet snuffle. “You’re- you’re all I have.”

Oh.

“George-” Dream’s voice becomes soft in an instant, more genuine sounding than George had ever heard from him before. Regardless, he crosses his arms and refuses to meet Dream’s eyes. “George, I...I didn’t mean it like...” He reaches a hand out slowly, but George leans away. Dream frowns. “What do you mean...I’m all you have?”

“It doesn’t matter.” George strains.

“Did it really bother you that much..?”

Silence.

Dream exhales. *I'm not letting you hide away again.* "George," Dream crouches down to meet at the others' eye level, and slowly pulls his arms away from being crossed, holding his hands in both of his gently. George's glassy, brown eyes hesitantly look up.

"I'm sorry." Dream says. "I've been a real dick to you." There's no irony, no joking tone, no sly grin on his face. For the first time, it feels like there's no barrier between them. It wasn't just Dream, a vampire, screwing around with a human for the fun of it.

It's just two people, two people having a real conversation.

Maybe that's what George made him feel that was so unusual.

Normal. Understood.

George tries to blink some tears away, and smiles. "Yeah. You have been."

The two laugh lightly, and Dream playfully pushes George's shoulder. "Yeah, yeah, whatever." Dream stands up straight again, keeping George's hands in his own as a silent reassurance. "I'm serious, though. You have my full permission to yell at me if I'm ever acting awful."

"I'd have lost my voice by now if I did that." George rolls his eyes, the teariness in his eyes having completely disappeared now. It makes Dream smile.

"You wanna go finish your map, now? I promise I'll do my best to help this time, even if I might spill ink all over the page."

"Sure, but don't do that, please." George giggles breathily.

"No promises."

Dream places a hand on the small of George's back and pushes the door open again, and begins to walk towards the kitchen to rejoin Sapnap. George stops again, though, and turns to face him. "Oh, actually, I have a book that has all my maps documented in them. It's a small brown one on the top shelf, I think. Could you grab it and meet me at the table?"

Dream smiles. "Of course." George smiles back warmly, thanking him with his eyes. He turns and

returns to the kitchen, and Dream hears the two already bickering, already going at their fake hatred once more.

Right, the book.

Stepping back over to the shelf they were just standing by, Dream reaches up and traces a finger across the bindings of multiple novels on the top shelf, each one feeling rough, but sturdy with mostly leather covers. George did seem like the reader type, he supposed. Dream could easily picture him being enamored by world building and hundreds of pages of plot more interesting than his own life. Dream wonders if maybe he felt less of a need to read since he was around recently, and wondered if maybe he was interesting enough to keep his attention on the world he lives in.

He likes to think so.

Small and brown. He thinks. His index finger stops at a shorter book in the array, and draws it out with a careful tilt. Holding it in both hands, he reads the cover's title. *MAPS*. Simple, to the point. Very George.

He sets a hand at the end of the book row, and pushes them all to one side to close the gap, preventing any of them from falling over later. But just as he does, his eye catches something unusual at the new opening.

Is that...a hole in the wall?

Strangely enough, behind where books once were, there's a precise square opening in the wall, holding a single, small, brown book.

Wait...

Dream looks at the book in his hand, confused. *George didn't mean this one, right?*

He reaches a hand, and feels the cover of the book in the wall. It's rough, but not like the others. It's ragged. Used. The binding of the book was slightly torn, presumably from lots of wear and tear. He gently pulls it out and holds it up, eyes scanning the cover.

There was no title on this one. It had bits of dirt marks on it, and many signs of being opened over and over again, almost harshly so.

Dream looks between the two, back and forth. *Why did he have this one hidden? He didn't mention anything about a hole in the wall. There's no way he meant for me to find this one...right?*

Maybe it would be a good idea to put the book down and pretend like it never existed, but then again...

The thought of George hiding something from him was so intriguing. Would it reveal something that explains why Dream can't just treat him like another human? Maybe a secret that explained how George is an angel sent from above to give him the miracle of genuine connection. *Something* to explain why George was such a fixation to him.

Dream stares at the book for a long, long while, and sighs. *Just one look. That's all.*

He sets the other book down on George's bed, and delicately takes the first page between his fingers to flip it open.

Dream's heart plummets the second the page's contents registers to his brain.

Drawings of figures, of sharp teeth. Scribbles of random writings and notes out from them. Unless someone had upset a glass of water, some pages have tear marks on them. One drawn figure in particular, despite not being very well drawn, Dream recognizes by the height and hair. Technoblade. A vampire he'd only talked with twice (well, more like fought with over food). Other figures on the page he doesn't recognize, but they all have one thing in common.

They all have fangs.

Sentence long notes are written next to each of them, all saying things along the lines of *'falls easily for bear traps'* or *'quick on their feet, can't outrun'*.

Dream nearly drops the book to the floor with how much his hands become numb. His face feels as if all the color in it drains. His button-up shirt and loose black pants are suddenly too heavy on him, and it feels as if the air itself is trying to drag him to hell.

This can't be right.

Why wouldn't George tell me about this?

He flips another page, forgetting his initial promise to only look for a moment. There's more. More figures, faces, bared teeth, paragraphs and paragraphs of weaknesses and reminders of how to best escape each one. He flips another page, this time shakily, and sees a full page of writing. His eyes skim it frantically, hoping to find something, *anything* that could prove that maybe this wasn't George's book, or that it was all some elaborate joke.

Dream's stomach drops at the sound of nearing footsteps from the hall, and hurriedly shoves the book back into where it was in the wall and picks up the one he originally meant to take to George, like he'd asked.

George arrives in the doorway, and casually places a hand in his pant pocket. "Hey, you found it yet? Or do you need my help?" George smiles slyly, seeming not to pick up on Dream's heart which was currently slamming against his ribcage like a feral tiger in a cage.

"O-Oh, yeah." Dream forces himself to breathe in order to make a steady, clear sentence. "Found it. I'm coming." He holds the book up hoping it was proof enough for George to leave. He silently pleads that George won't see the messy way he'd shoved the books around on his shelf. Thankfully, if he did notice, he didn't comment on it.

George softens his expression, and Dream thanks God for his obliviousness. Or maybe for Dream's insane luck. "Don't take too long, idiot." With that, George turns and heads back into the hall.

When he's sure the footsteps are far off enough, Dream turns back to the shelf and grabs the book once more with shaky hands.

He really is going to be the end of me.

The Devil's Mask

Chapter Notes

SORRY we took a fat break since this is a pretty long chapter lol. i apologize for the wait! updates probably won't be weekly from here on out since we want to make sure we're spending lots of time on each chapter to make it worth the read <3 tysm for supporting us!

Warnings for chapter 6: swearing, blood, animal hunting, self deprecation

enjoy :D

I have to hide this somewhere. I need to see all of it. I need to see how much danger I'm actually in.

He places every other book where it had been before he'd moved them, and checks from every angle to be sure that the hole he'd found wasn't visible. Through a strained, dry throat, he exhales with relief.

“*Fuck.*” He whispers to himself. There's no time right now to think about everything, his only chance at getting out of all of this was to make it seem like everything was normal.

He can do that, right? He can act like his normal, cocky self, as if he hadn't just found George's vampire-murdering plans for him later.

Yeah. This is fine.

The question now is, where does he put the book? He can't just put it back where it was, there was no way George was going to sneak in while George was sleeping and risk being caught. And maybe killed.

Maybe in the living room...under the rug? Too obvious. Under the couch? Too visible. Between the cushions? That would probably make the most sense, that's where he'd been sleeping, anyways. It'd be the easiest to access when he got a chance to look again.

Taking another deep breath, he walks into the hall with the book held out of sight behind his back, with the book of maps in his other hand to his side.

“There you are!” Sapnap groans with the raise of his arms. “I swear, you’re like an old man or something.”

“Yeah,” Dream winces at the pathetic croak still evident in his voice, and clears his throat. “Takes one to know one.”

Sapnap thankfully takes the playful jab like all the others, and turns back to nudge George some more, probably just to annoy him. Dream takes the chance to quickly step over to the couch, and shoves the journal deep into the space between the cushions, and makes sure it disappears completely behind the upholstery before shuffling back to join the two humans.

The disturbing contents of the book never leave his mind as they work away at their maps. He tries to make sense of what he’d read. *So George kills vampires?*

He can only imagine George stabbing a silver blade into his neck, then dragging his dead body through the woods and off a cliff. The idea makes him feel sick, nausea swirling around uncomfortably in his stomach like paint in water.

He zones out, standing next to and towering over a seated George.

“You okay?”

“Huh-? Oh, yeah.” Dream stuttered. “I’m fine.”

George flashes him a small smile before turning back to the ink and paper. “If you say so.”

He swallows, uncomfortable. His brain buzzes with negative thoughts.

It’s too much. He’s starving, the hollowing of his stomach begging for food to the point he fears it may be caving in on itself. The thought of his own kind causing George this amount of pain, the thought of George spending hours setting up traps to capture vampires and brutally murder them. It’s all too much.

He’s worried for himself. He’s worried about George.

“I’ll be back.” He says, barely managing a steady voice. They both hum in acknowledgement, allowing him to slip away. He’s grateful they don’t choose to question him.

He stalks down the hall, pulling open a coat closet by the front door and digging through to find an umbrella. Once he does find one (it's blue, of course), he steps out onto the porch, closing the creaky door behind him as quietly as he can manage. He struggles for a moment to open the umbrella, but eventually he's able to pry it open to provide shade for himself once he steps off the porch.

He begins a slow walk through the woods, mapping out the familiar trails in his mind. Birds chirp deep in the forest, twigs snap beneath his feet, but all the sounds blend into his mind as he stares at the forest floor.

Why does George hunt vampires? Maybe that's why he was attacked by one the other day. I wonder if he killed them. Why wouldn't he tell me?

I'm so fucking hungry.

He takes in a deep sigh, allowing the cool forest air to enter his lungs and wash them out.

He follows a familiar cluster of trees to reach a river that breaks the forest.

He crouches under a tree that provides enough shade for him to lower the umbrella. He peers into the clear water, counting the pebbles at the bottom. He waits impatiently for a passing fish, rolling up his sleeves.

When one does, he thrusts his arm into the water and snatches it, pulling its slippery body from the water.

He brings the creature up to his lips and bites the cold flesh, drawing out the blood beneath the skin. It's not the best tasting, but it's enough to calm the rumbling in his hollow stomach. Once he's finished with one, he manages to catch another, which he also drains the blood of.

He drops both dead fish into the water, watching it cloud with their red blood, scaring the rest of the fish away in a dashing frenzy.

He looks into the water, aching to see his reflection. He wishes he could see the faint bags resting

beneath his eyes, and blood dripped from his lips and smeared his freckled cheek, it was so annoying that he could never know if he looked human or not.

Maybe it was better like this, though. Maybe he'd be horrified by the person he saw looking back at him.

Just like George would be.

He reaches a hand up to wipe away the cool blood, feeling it trickle down his chin.

He knows he can't stay long before George and Sarnap will start to get suspicious, especially after leaving so abruptly like that, but that doesn't stop him from wanting to stay here forever. He sits down and rests his legs, swinging them over the water on the rock ledge. *I can't realistically stay here for more than half an hour unless I want to end up with a bunch of questions being thrown at me. I don't think I could lie very well right now.*

After a few minutes, his stomach feels like it's calmed down. He's not thriving by any means, but he's happy to get some sort of salvation. His stomach feels less empty.

What the hell am I supposed to do? That's what he thinks of my kind. That's what he thinks of me.

The water ripples with deep reds at the surface, pooling outwards and being tossed in the slight current. Like always, the only leftover evidence of Dream being there is blood.

What is he going to do to me if he finds out? He's not as naive as I thought, then. It was a mistake to go after him. God, he could've fucking killed me that first day if he knew. Would he have killed me on the spot if he knew?

Of course he would. Vampires are nothing to humans.

Just monsters.

I'm a monster to him.

Dream collapses into his hands, trying in vain to rub away the stress that must be evident on his face.

Why did it have to be him, of all people? Why did the one human I picked have to turn out to be a super intelligent vampire killing machine?

And why did I have to get attached to him?

The rock is harsh under his fingers. Cold. Unforgiving.

Maybe George would make an exception for him?

George's saddened tone pangs again in Dream's ears. *But you don't like me, do you?*

Of course I like you.

That's what he told him.

Maybe in another world, where Dream wasn't a vampire, they could have been friends. Or more.

Dream pries his eyes open and looks at his hands. His nails were already starting to grow out again, not quite claws yet, but it was enough to remind him that at any chance his body gets, it becomes vicious. He clenches his fist.

I thought I found someone that kind of understood me. At least a little.

But you're just another lie.

He abruptly stands with gritted teeth, and whirls around to slam his fist into a tree trunk behind him. It immediately cracks with splinters flying outwards, leaving a sizable hole where his fist was. He sighs as he pulls his hand out, grimacing at the harsh purpling bruise and scratches it left on his knuckles.

I really have to stop beating up trees when I'm angry.

He plops down onto the rock again, and falls onto his back with a huff.

And here I am again, destroying other things because of my own issues.

I guess that's what I've been doing to George, too. Trying to kill him for my own satisfaction, to prove that I can be what I'm supposed to be. Hurting him to make myself feel better.

When he finds out what I am, there's going to be nobody left to care about me.

Dream blinks at the canopy of leaves above him with a sudden realization. *So maybe he never has to find out.*

Yes, that's it. That's all he has to do. Just keep filing his teeth every day, keep sneaking out every couple days to drink enough blood to get by, pretend that every time him and George are within 5 feet of each other he doesn't have an innate urge to grab him by the shoulders and drink the life out of him.

He's done it for this long, how hard could forever be?

All I have to worry about is what's in that journal. I need to know how much he knows about vampires. If I can avoid doing anything he'll find suspicious, It'll be fine. I'll be fine.

That's what I'll do. I need to read the rest of that journal.

But for now, the world seems a bit too fast to deal with.

Dream lays in the grass until the sky goes dark.

Eventually he realizes how long he's been out. He sighs and sits up, cracking his knuckles. He

doesn't want to leave, but he knows George and Sapnap are probably wondering where he went. In a moment's notice, he's on his feet and making the trek back to the house. With the sun setting in the sky, he doesn't need a shade to protect him from its unforgiving rays.

The front door shuts with a soft click. Sapnap chuckles. "What was that about?"

George looks up from the trail he was making with his pen. "You mean Dream? I dunno. He's weird sometimes."

"Well yeah, figured that much." Sapnap says. "He just seemed bothered by something, I guess. But you know him better than I do, I trust your judgement."

George briefly considers it. *But what would he be upset about?* "You'd be surprised," He smiles back down as he draws another careful line. "He's a man of mystery."

Dream's words from earlier return to him. "*George,*" Dream had looked at him directly in his eyes. Though George's vision was slightly blurry with tears, he remembers how shocked he was by the genuine look in them. "*I'm sorry. I've been a real dick to you.*"

Even after George thought he had Dream figured out, he was still surprised by him. *Didn't think there was an ounce of genuine compassion in his body.* George snickers to himself. *Guess I was wrong.*

"Got that right," Sapnap agrees. "Does he even have a house? He's been hanging out here for days now! Not to mention you're living room is a mess. I thought he'd at least have the decency to take you to bed."

"He does!" George defends. "Wh- Wait, no! Sapnap! He's just staying here for the time being. He sleeps in the living room.."

Sapnap drops his pen in the middle of his laughter, lightly smacking the table. George blushes.

"Seriously, though. It's painfully obvious how into you he is."

George squints up at him. "I dunno..."

"Dude, he flirted with me to make you jealous. He knows I'm straight as a plank. That's as obvious as it gets."

George sighs, and sets down his pen. “No, he’s just- that’s just what he does. He just teases me endlessly, I always feel like I’m getting mixed signals. He’s so annoying.”

“I think he’s giving you *mixed signals*, ” Sapnap accentuates his words with quote marks using his hands. “Because you’re so stubborn all the time. Maybe he thinks you don’t like him back.”

George groans, and puts his face in his hands. “You think so?” He mumbles.

“Yes, I do.” Sapnap places a supporting hand on George’s shoulder, causing him to look up. “But all you have to do is show some encouragement back. If you’re so worried he doesn’t actually like you, then you can find out!”

“Are you telling me to flirt with him?” George deadpans.

“Precisely.”

Deciding they were probably done with work for the day, and that their interest now was more on this conversation, George sets all the tools to the side and begins rolling up the map neatly.

“Your definition of flirting is just making dick jokes and calling people hot. I’m not doing that.”

“Way to call me out, man. For the record, it works. But whatever, you don’t have to do it my way if you don’t want to. Just...show you’re interested, you know?”

“Yeah, but...” George huffs. “I guess we’re on weird ground right now. We kinda- he sort of slept in my room last night.”

Sapnap makes a noise between a choke and a laugh and meets George’s eyes with a wild expression. “He *what?!* ”

“It wasn’t-”

“Did you, like- did you cuddle or anything?”

George flushes a deep scarlet as he tries to hide his face by looking away. “I...maybe?”

“ *Dude*, ” Sapnap smacks a hand on the table. “You’re kidding, right?”

“It was just- he looked, like- tired, or something. I don’t know! I don’t know what his deal was.”

“Oh, you’re right, I know what it was.”

“What?”

“It’s called *being head over heels for you and wanting to cuddle*. ”

George scoffs. “That’s not true. He was probably just being weird again. He never *really* means it

like that.” *God, how I wish he did mean it, though.*

“George, listen to me.” Sarnap’s tone turns genuine, and it catches George’s attention enough to make him look up to meet Sarnap’s eyes. “He may joke about flirting a lot, but it’s definitely not just a joke with you. I mean, sleeping in the same bed? Where’s the punchline to that?”

George goes quiet for a moment, staring blankly back. *He has a point.* “I...I guess you’re kind of right.”

“Exactly,” Sarnap smiles, and stands from his chair to grab his jacket from the coat rack. “So have more confidence in yourself, if he pushes, you push back, man! He’s practically asking for it at this point.”

Pulling his bag up onto the table with a light thump, George considers the advice. *Maybe it would be nice to see Dream on the receiving end for a change.* “I can’t believe I’m listening to you. You’ve been single for like, a century.”

“Not true! I’ve had like, so many girlfriends. More than you’ve had.”

George rolls his eyes. “What an accomplishment! It’s not like I’m gay or anything.” George chuckles as Sarnap swats him on the arm.

“You better take my advice, man. You’ll never be able to live it down if you just let this chance go.”

George slips the map into the side pocket of his bag, and zips the top closed, just barely encasing all the tools and weapons inside. *He’s right. Who knows the next chance I’ll have for something like this. Not to mention, with someone like Dream.*

George sighs with resolve. “You’re right. I’ll go for it.”

He closes the door behind him, safely inside the house. It’s quiet, Dream figures George already went to sleep.

“Dream?” A sleep-heavy, accented voice breaks the silence.

The man in question whips around to face the culprit.

“You’re awake.” Dream huffs, after a moment.

“I am.” George says, tone unreadable. He’s sat down at the living room table by the entryway, with his arms on the table as if he had just been laying his head on them. Dream guessed that he was asleep before he came inside.

“Where’s Sappnap?” Dream briefly eyes the now dark kitchen and living room, noticing George seemed to be the only one here.

“He went home. You were out for a while.”

Dream breaks their eye contact, aiming his gaze at the ground in a guilty manner. “Sorry.”

George rubs an eye with his palm sleepily, and his brows furrow with concern. “Is everything okay?”

Dream swallows. “Yeah. Yeah, don’t worry about it.”

George sighs. “Okay, I’m heading off to bed. I just.. Wanted to make sure you were coming back.”

Oh. A foreign warmth blooms in Dream’s chest. *He really doesn’t know what I am, does he?*

“Thank you for checking on me. See you in the morning.”

“See you.”

With that, the brunette leaves the room, trudging off to his bedroom. Once his door shuts, the house falls silent again, save for the chirping crickets outside.

Dream sighs, and walks over to where George was sitting when he’d walked in. He places a hand over where his arms had been rested, so delicately as if the memory would disappear if he was too quick. The wood of the table is still warm from where George was asleep. *He really waited for me to come back.*

I don’t deserve that much compassion.

What had he ever done in his life to deserve someone like George? Dream was so abrasive, obnoxious, and just so intentionally jarring to anyone he met that he never minded when nobody would stick around. It wasn’t just about him being a vampire, no, other vampires made friends with each other. Even if they could be a little...aggressive compared to human friendships. Dream just

made a point to not welcome others into his life where they could get too close. All people were stupid. Actually, *everyone* is stupid.

But George...

Somehow, George put up with him for long enough. Thanks to this flirty, human persona he'd made for himself, Dream now considered George a friend. Someone actually worth being around.

It's been a long, *long* time since anyone had ever come close to making him feel that way.

Dream retracts his hand, almost missing the warmth from it as he wanders to the living room with the couch he'd been using every night now. *Well, most nights.*

The thought hits him like a brick to the head. *Holy shit, I slept in the same bed as someone who could kill me. And would, had he known what I am.*

Dream groans quietly to himself as he sinks into the couch corner with exhaustion - not from physical labor, but more so from emotional distress.

If I had made a single slip up in all the time I was around him, I could have a stake through my chest right now. I can't let him be suspicious.

Dream sits up abruptly. *His journal. I left it in the cushions.*

He immediately digs his hands back into where he remembered putting it before he left, holding his breath until his fingers made contact with a leather surface. *Thank God, it's still here.*

He immediately fumbles it into his hands and spins it around to see the front cover, loose threads sticking out from the left side where the pages are held together at the worn leather binding. It's much more intimidating now that he knows what the journal contains - it isn't exactly a happy occasion to read a book about all the different ways someone can kill you, let alone that person being literally in the next room. But, with a hold as steady as he can manage, Dream flips open to the first page again. *George, please don't come out of your room right now.*

That same sensation from before, though not as jarring, is still painfully present as he sees the first pages. All the notes in George's practiced straight-lined handwriting, with some off to the side that looked as if he maybe wrote it while running, it's hard to not feel nauseous at some of the descriptions of vampire wounds and hunting tactics. As he flipped through, Dream recognized only 2 other vague figures drawn in them, though neither by name. He wasn't the most social individual, even as a supernatural creature. Lots of socializing, as the way he sees it, is usually a waste of time and energy.

Most of the time.

His eyes fall upon a certain passage in inky black writing. He begins to read it, sitting down on the sofa and wrapping a quilt around his shoulders.

The first time I was attacked I was 17.

Immediately, Dream's interest peaks. He gives one last look at George's closed door before continuing the passage.

Though many people might ask, "Didn't it hurt? Weren't you scared? Do you live in fear of vampires because of it?"

People who think those kinds of questions have obviously never been attacked by a vampire.

The truth is, it didn't hurt, and I wasn't scared. Or if I was, I didn't notice.

It felt like destiny had finally caught up with me.

A son, not living up to carry on the family name of once-loving parents. A student at my small school with only 50 people, I was often told I was quiet, but funny when I wanted to be. People that would say things like that to me made my days a lot brighter. But it also reminded me that I didn't add much value to other people's lives.

I've always been selfish, I know that now more than ever. Even when a bloodthirsty creature leaned over me, I thought that maybe it'd be the easiest path for my life. Maybe I could get out of dealing with so many things that I knew I would have to deal with if I continued to live my life as a man in Anderrige. Not that that by itself was a bad thing, just the fact that I was me.

Dream's eyes drift across the writing and come to the end of the first page, and realizes his breath is so shallow he can hardly feel his own heart beating. *I really shouldn't be reading this.* Dream looks up shamefully to George's door, seeming almost more anxiety inducing than before. *I don't have a right to know any of these things.*

...

But.

It's for George's happiness that I need to know.

Dream swallows, and turns the page. This handwriting is a bit more lopsided, and there's only text that reaches to half the page before becoming blank.

I wonder what that vampire is doing now. My subconscious blocked out a lot of that memory, I think, but I do remember a couple things. And the vividness of them never leaves. He looked even younger than me. But taller, as are most. But what I remember most is what I didn't expect.

He looked like he didn't even know if he wanted to kill me.

Even though he had just left a permanent gash in my shoulder, tearing muscle that still isn't healed now, and had me pinned to the ground with his fangs bared. He hesitated. It hesitated.

And I will never forgive it for that. For letting me get away and live with this.

Dream blinks. Then narrows his eyes at the words, and reads them again. *Young. Taller. Hesitated.*

A gash in my shoulder.

Dream lets a breath escape his throat, not knowing that he was straining himself. This couldn't be real.

He reads the last line.

I will never let go of how angry that vampire boy still makes me.

The journal drops out of his hands and onto the couch, and slides off the edge and onto the floor. Questions and emotions tear up his insides.

It's coming back to haunt me. I thought I was free. Dream clenches his fists into the couch's navy, tightly woven cushions, definitely straining the fabric.

It was him.

George was the human I tried to attack when I was a kid.

He closes the book, fingers feeling numb as he does. It feels surreal, but not in a good way. Definitely in the worst way possible. He shakily slips the book back into the cushions.

It was me. He swallows uncomfortably. *I did this to him.*

How could I be deserving of his love after I've been so horrible to him? Not just then but now. I've seen him cry because of me. It's my own fault he feels the need to hunt my kind. For good reason too. We all deserve this.

His heart beats feverishly against his chest, the beckoning of a disturbing night's sleep enticing him. *It's too much to think about right now. Maybe when I wake up this will all be in my head.*

He doubts the possibility as he drifts off to sleep.

He doesn't get much sleep before he hears George's door click open, stirring him awake.

He grumbles softly, something about closing the blinds, when George walks over. “Good morning.” He says, his tone surprisingly quiet.

Dream opens his eyes, rubbing them lightly. “I don’t want to wake up.” He mumbles, his mind immediately calmed by the sound of George’s voice. He’d become something comforting to Dream in the past few days.

“Well, we need to have breakfast. So wake up.”

Dream sighs and sits up, noticing that all of the blankets he’d usually slept with (greedily, especially since he’s used to bitter wind), had been shoved off onto the floor already. He hears the clatter of pots and pans in the kitchen as George settles in the kitchen.

That’s weird. Why would I kick off all my blan-

Dream’s heart stops in remembrance. He looks up at the brunette, who was currently buttering a pan.

Oh, right.

I’m the source of all of George’s pain and suffering. Great. Still no clue how to deal with that.

“I know you don’t usually eat, but do you want any toast?” George offers with a look over his shoulder.

Dream flinches out of his thoughts. He definitely takes way too long to respond. “Oh, uh...y-yeah. Sure.” He answers, not really hearing what the question was. George seems satisfied, though, smiling and turning back to the pan to throw some bread on.

The floor almost seems as if it’s moving under Dream as he stands and makes his way to his same chair that he’s grown used to without thinking about it. A lot happened at this table, Dream notes to himself humorlessly.

It feels horrible to talk to him. I shouldn’t even be allowed to talk to him for what I did. He doesn’t even know.

He watches George meticulously move around the kitchen, preparing the meal. His hair is still messy from bedhead. He's smiling to himself a little, it's bright enough to light up the room. *I'm horrible.*

"You sleep okay?"

"Um, yeah." Dream sighs. "It was fine."

George sets a ceramic plate in front of him with a buttered slice of toast.

Oh.

"Do you want any jam or anything? I'm glad you're eating, finally." George says, offering a small smile.

"Ah, no, it's okay. Thank you."

Dream picks up the toast and takes a small bite, waiting till George turns away before gagging.

I don't know why I keep trying.

"Oh, oh my gosh, is it okay?" George turns, sporadic and with genuine concern that makes Dream sick. "I didn't make it too crispy, did I? I-I know I'm not the best at making it but--"

"No, no," Hands raise in assurance, and George calms. "I just- I think I'm a little sick. Or something. Maybe I shouldn't eat." *Sick is right. I'm sick in so many ways.*

"Oh," George eases hand to reach for his plate. "Do you not want this then...?"

"Yeah. Sorry."

George smiles gently, and pulls the glass plate away with care, almost as if to make sure he heard

the answer correctly. “If you say so.”

It hurt to see George be so concerned about him. Everything about this was wrong. It was wrong in so many ways, more than before, which Dream didn’t think was possible. If before was complicated, this was a puzzle with half of the pieces being broken. Is it even worth trying to put anything together at that point?

“Have you been sick for a while...?” George’s voice nudges into his fuzzy thoughts with a softness to it so that he sounds nervous for asking.

“Huh?”

“You... I don’t think I’ve actually seen you eat anything. If you haven’t felt well, you could’ve told me. It’s fine.”

A soft clink of a plate being left in the sink goes almost unnoticed when Dream struggles to come up with an answer. His throat gets a little more tense. “Uh- yeah. I was kinda embarrassed, but...” He swallows, avoiding George’s eyes so that he can’t see the lie in his own gaze. “I have a hard time eating a lot. Like- I mean, I dunno.” George looking directly at him was really not helping his nerves. “Most stuff doesn’t agree with me, I guess.”

A reflecting pause. “I’m sorry.”

No, I’m sorry.

“Eh, it’s alright.” Dream stands, avoiding that same window light that has begun to be really annoying every morning. “You don’t have to waste your stuff on me anymore, I guess. Just have more for yourself.”

George tilts his head, seeming to contemplate something before smiling curtly and responding in a slightly lower tone. “Nothing is a waste if it’s on you.”

Dream scoffs. Both out of surprise and discomfort. Fake flirting feels a lot worse when you know the person you’re flirting with was almost your dinner. “Yeah, yeah, you’re being dumb.”

George smiles smugly in victory. “Mhm.” He brushes past Dream with what almost seems like practiced ease. As the vampire turns to watch him walk to somewhere in the living room, he realizes something.

This hurt.

Holy shit, this felt so bad.

When did he start to care this much? Of course, guilt would be natural, he expected that. But...

It almost felt physically painful to keep something so big from George like this. That kind of remorse is something Dream didn't think he's ever experienced in his life. At least not enough for it to be a familiar feeling.

Maybe it was just the fact that he knew George on a level that he hasn't known anyone else on. At least in a very long time.

The look in that human's eyes when he knew he'd die. That I was going to end his life. Dream feels his chest stiffen at the memory. *That was him. I did that to him.*

And now I'm lying to his face about it. And making things even worse than if I had left it alone.

“So,” George's voice intrudes like a beautiful, yet terrifyingly strong current as the brunet suddenly is in front of him again with both his hands behind his back. Dream lost track of when he'd walked back over to the kitchen island to be in front of him. “I thought we might be able to...do something today. Together.” George says with a smile that's all too sweet and excited. He pulls a hand out from behind his back and reveals a thin novel with the most grimace-worthy romance cover featuring what appears to be a werewolf holding a blonde haired girl in a revealing red dress.

Dream can't help but smile incredulously in both repulsion and hilarity. “The hell? What *is* that?” The smile feels very welcomed on his lips, and he allows himself to simply appreciate the stupidity of George sometimes, even if just for a moment.

“Okay, no, no listen! Listen- I was thinking we can make fun of it.”

“Where did you even get this?” Dream chuckles, taking the book in his hands and examining the cover more. It looked like something you’d find in a school girl’s bag.

“Sapnap gave it to me.” George deadpans. “A birthday present, as he put it. Even though it was a month after my birthday.”

Dream squints at the girl on the cover, then back up at George. “But- wait, do you *like* books like this!?”

George waves his arms, clearly offended at the comment. “No! Oh my *god*, no. It was a joke gift.”

Dream couldn’t help his chuckle at that. It was very Sapnap-like to get a gift like this. “Why werewolves?” He asks, pointing to the other figure on the cover.

“No clue.” George smiles fondly as he thinks. “I haven’t touched the book past the first page since I got it. But I saw it yesterday and thought that-”

“I’m not reading this.” Dream says.

“You’re right, I’m reading it to you.”

“No- ugh. George...”

“It’ll be fun! It will be, I swear.” George pulls the book back with a grin on his face. “I read the first part and it was already so *bad*. It’ll be funny.”

Dream turns to the sink, and picks up his plate and turns the knob for the faucet and starts to clean it. He never cleans his dishes, but that didn’t matter. He needs to avoid talking too directly with George or he thinks he might explode if he makes eye contact with the dark eyes too much. He groans. “You’re seriously gonna force me to listen to that nonsense? What’s wrong with you?”

“Fine- one chapter.”

Dream slows his hand on the scrub against the dish. *Maybe I can make up an excuse to leave after.*

Maybe I can get away from him before I can't stop myself from doing something stupid. All I have to do is make sure I keep my distance.

“Fine.”

Windows become dark with the fallen sun, lamps and candles lighting the couch, carpet, logged walls and skin with a familiar orange hue.

“Laura cries out, *Oh, my love! How I've waited for this day! Our love is too strong to be kept apart by our differences!*” George reads melodramatically with annunciation in his hand gestures and fake tears. He's seated on the other end of the couch from Dream, legs crossed on the cushion so that he's facing directly towards the blond. Dream lays with his legs stretched out, almost reaching George's feet, his head laying on the side with arms cushioning his right cheek.

Dream was hardly listening when George started reading earlier that day, mostly only chuckling when a particularly bad line was emphasized by him in his best impression of an American accent. They read the first chapter in the kitchen, but to his surprise (and accomplishment), Dream had asked him to read one more chapter because the first one left on a cliffhanger. He used the same excuse for the next chapter. And then the next one. George took a lunch break, and Dream took a turn reading to him. And then they stopped making excuses. Now it was past sunset and they both sat on the couch, both engaged in their ability to spot horribly cheesy lines and unnecessary kissing scenes.

“If by differences she means him being a literal animal, then sure.” Dream smiles lazily at his own joke, smile slightly offset by his face being smushed on its side. His voice drags with low sweetness. Whatever seemed to be bothering him earlier must've been healed by their joking together, at least for the time being.

George wasn't dumb. He knew Dream wasn't just *not feeling well*. There was definitely something personal, something deep that was seriously getting to him. And he made a point to never tell George what that thing is.

And call him selfish, or uncaring, but George was just fine with that. If Dream didn't want to tell him about his life and be private, that was his choice. In fact, it almost made George feel more comfortable with keeping his own life secret as well. The thought of being seen as someone with no trauma, no baggage or issues, was quite appealing. He can be whoever he wants with Dream.

Sapnap's words echo back to him. *You better take my advice, man. You'll never be able to live it down if you just let this chance go.*

George looks over Dream's beautiful features. *I'll go for it.* George had promised Sapnap that. He looks back down at the book, finding his line again after looking at Dream for what was definitely too long of a time to be unnoticed.

"The beautiful beast Laura has fallen for approaches, his abs highlighted by the moonlight." George continues, catching the eye roll from the other side of the couch. "*I'm sorry, my dearest. I have kept you at bay for too long. I would fight the entire pack if it meant your safety.*"

Dream huffs in amusement. "Dear God, if I have to hear one of them talk like a preacher at each other for one more second I think I'm gonna break something."

"I know," George groans. "You think they could've realized that they don't sound like people at all. Well- except the guy, he's in character."

Dream raises a brow, and slowly asks, "Because he's not human?"

George blinks up at him, meeting yellow eyes. "I guess. But also because guys are dumb."

Dream laughs genuinely at that. George does, too.

There's a silent moment between them as George watches Dream's eyes trace around the room.

I'll go for it.

"Good thing we're both guys, then." George says a bit lower than his usual tone.

Dream meets his eyes again, expression blank. George can see his Adam's apple shift, but there's no response. George can feel emotions climb up in his throat all at once - nerves, excitement, curiosity, they all begin to bubble over and mix into one.

"Are you dumb, Dream?" George smiles coyly. *You'll see how it feels to be messed with, asshole.*

"No?" Dream smiles weakly, giving a confused look.

"Hmm," All logic seems to leave, every ounce of restraint leaving George's body as an opportunity rises. If Dream got to mess with him, he can do it, too. "I know I must be. For this, at least."

Before Dream can question him, George uncrosses his legs and leans forward, hands on either side of Dream's knees. Dream's eyes widen. George can feel himself blushing at his own doing, but is able to compose himself under this persona he's built, one without doubts or insecurities. The night outside consumes him, and takes hold of his will. He can do anything. "I don't think I've told you," George reaches to hold Dream's freckled cheek, which the taller tenses at with reddening cheeks. "You're very pretty, Dream."

George revels in Dream's expression that he can only describe as broken.

"Wh-" Dream tries, and swallows before trying again, leaning away a little as if to escape George's intense gaze. "What...? I-" Dream's mouth closes again, his eyes darting in every possible place except George's eyes.

A sly grin plays at George's lips, he leans in impossibly closer for just a moment. "You're so easy." He murmurs, minty breath falling dangerously close to Dream's lips. He leans back, removing his arms from either side of Dream's legs. The moment is over suddenly, leaving Dream a flushed and confused mess. George revels in it. *I did that.* He thinks. *I did that to him.*

George takes his time in admiring how disoriented Dream is while he struggles to collect himself, Dream only blushing harder at seeing George look at him so intently. George loves that he can be the one to laugh at him this time.

"Can't handle a taste of your own medicine?" George says snidely.

“No...” Dream forces out. “I- I just...you’re so- ugh.”

“Spit it out.” George says with a knowing smirk. He’s going to take advantage of every second he has with Dream being like this.

“I...” Dream starts, clenching his fist then unclenching it, and sitting up suddenly. “You know what, no.”

George quirks his head to the side curiously. “No?”

Dream seems to resolve something in his head slowly, though the second his usual spark reappears in his eyes with a look up at George, he knows it’s over for him. “You want to know what you are, George?”

George raises a brow. “What’s that, Dream?”

“You’re *beautiful*,” Dream says, taking his turn to lean towards George. George parts his lips in surprise at the sudden turnaround, almost regretting how quickly he had pushed Dream a moment ago, because it clearly caused some sort of response in the blond. “And smart.” A larger hand reaches for George’s face, and George thinks he’s going to hold his cheek to mirror his previous action, but instead Dream grips his jaw gently, but also firmly so that he has no choice but to look at him. “And brave.” He leans closer. “And *incredible*. ” Dream leans in more, towering over George while sitting up on his knees, George subconsciously had moved his arms to splay out to support the caged in position he was now in. George didn’t need a mirror to know he looked like a ripe tomato.

“Stop it.” George mutters.

“Why?” Dream challenges, holding his jaw just the slightest bit tighter, and smiling a small bit. It was the first smug expression he’d seen from the man all day, George realizes. “It’s the truth.”

George stares unblinking into Dream’s eyes. Whatever had just snapped in Dream, it wasn’t just out of spite. There was something else going on with him, but honestly, George didn’t have the energy, and certainly wasn’t in the mental state to address it. Their faces were too close, the unspoken rule of never moving beyond flirting hangs between them, a barrier between their lips as they are so tantalizingly close to just throwing it all away right here, right now, not caring about the consequences. George would do a lot to have no consequences.

George slowly rests his hands on Dream's chest, keeping eye contact with him as he speaks. "Your breath stinks." George lies, hoping it'll break the tension in the air enough to ease the awkwardness that would be sure to follow.

Dream scoffs, and seems to ignore his fake complaint until George starts pushing at Dream's chest. He looks down, and flushes with embarrassment at realizing that George really was trying to part. He eases off, careful to avoid George's legs when settling back. Their eyes never leave each other, the silence carrying their private conversation between looks.

"That was too much." Dream says, staring blankly at him.

"Yeah." George agrees, but then smiles. "You always are, but I keep you around anyways."

Dream chuckles awkwardly, thankful for the lighthearted response. "I know. Sorry."

They sit in complete silence, and George glances at the window behind Dream and into the darkness only dimly lit by moonlight. Then he looks back to Dream, who's picking at his fingernails, and though he's good at hiding it, he's obviously really tense about what just happened.

"Hey," George prompts softly, and Dream looks up. "You wanna go look at the stars? I just remembered, I-I have a nice view from my roof. I have a ladder to get up." George manages to get out. He hopes it doesn't come across as too romance-inducing. Or maybe he does hope that.

Dream looks up, as if he could see the stars from inside. "Yeah?"

George stands, and walks over to beside his bedroom door, and reaches up to crank a ladder down. At the top of it, a wooden trap door awaits opening. He turns back to the blond, and smiles in an attempt to ease his nerves. "Yeah."

The two sit beside one another on the roof. George sighs, running a hand through his hair. Dream looks up, admiring the way the stars decorate the deep indigo sky, and how the clouds look as if

they are the last bits of whipped cream on the surface of a coffee as it melts. The moon is bright, although not as bright as the mighty sun. Dream smiles a bit, the air feels fresh and clean from their elevated position. A faint fog rolls across the horizon. The roof tile under his fingers is smooth yet grainy.

“Do you ever think about how the moon doesn’t change.” George suddenly says. It comes out timid, intimate. “Like, no matter where you are o-or who you are, the moon is always the same.”

“Do you think about it?” Their questions are directed to the sky as they answer one another.

“All the time.” George whispers.

A comfortable silence washes over them.

“Was your mask the moon?” George questions.

Dream giggles lowly, he can’t help it. “The moon? No, no...unless...” He runs his fingers over George’s knuckles. “You want it to be.”

George shuffles his legs closer to himself and smiles up at him through navy shadows. “You really don’t joke, do you? This is just...how you are, isn’t it?”

He purses his lips at the question. “What do you mean, *how I am*, do you mean hot?”

George spits out a breath of air, making a sound between a laugh and a wince. “*God*, you shouldn’t say things like that, Dream.”

“Why not? Why does it matter to you?”

“I know it shouldn’t, but-” George swallows. “You’re too much for me, sometimes.” He admits.

Dream turns, but tries not to make it obvious that he’s staring. He can’t help it, the dim glow of the moon makes George’s skin shine so brilliantly.

“Is that bad?” Dream whispers.

George pauses. His corner of his mouth twitches upwards. “No.”

His favorite memories of George are ones where George doesn’t even know that he’s looking, and he’s still beautiful. How he looked at the stars, searching, hoping, reaching, it was so entrancing to watch him. So incredible to see his simplicity uncover something more. Something was there, behind his eyes, and Dream wanted to pull it out.

George turns to him, wetting his lips. “What?”

“Nothing.” Dream blushes.

“You’re staring.”

“Am I?”

“Yes.” George smiles nervously. Their faces are close enough for George to count Dream’s freckles. George seems to notice, his eyes flicker down and then up again.

Dream leans forward slightly, bringing George’s focus back to his eyes. “Does it bother you?”

“No.” George answers without hesitation.

Dream parts his lips slightly, and breathes gently. George can feel it on his lips.

The pure impulse surging in Dream’s veins to take George’s blood could ignite dynamite, yet his desire to gently kiss him could make the most violent hurricane clear.

Flames spark in Dream’s chest, he places his index finger and thumb under George’s chin and slightly pulls it towards him. “That’s good.” His voice is a soft rumble.

George’s eyes are half lidded with flecks of starlight in them. The world disappears. He sees George. He sees George’s deep, rich blood. His body moves involuntarily as he leans closer.

Dream internally begins to tear apart as his mind crosses a scenario - one where he takes George’s mouth to his own and pushes him down to take the life out of him and drain every drop of blood without hesitation, and one where he kisses George carefully, he feels gentle lips against his own, and he has no impulse to hurt him and is rid of every horrible, monstrous impulse. Dream knew the

second scenario was impossible, but he struggled to let it go regardless.

George hardly breathes as he mutters words to Dream's lips. "Is this okay?"

Dream's heart claws at its cage. "I think so." He murmurs. *Fuck. Oh fuck.*

His heart is beating so loud he's surprised George can't hear it. His hand moves from George's chin to rest gently against his cheek, beneath his jawline.

George's eyes flutter closed. Dream's soul catapults at an alarming rate. The flashes of potential blood spilling plague his brain all at once as George leans closer.

Fear jolts down Dream's spine and causes him to abruptly pull back, his hand coming with.

I can't do it.

I don't want to hurt him.

George blinks.

"Dream?"

Dream's breath is ragged and shallow. "I..I'm going inside. It's getting cold." He says, voice wavering. He scrambles to stand, though tripping in the process, and shuffles to the door in a hurry.

George watches helplessly as he scrambles away, leaving him more breathless and confused than ever.

Dream shuts the door behind him, George doesn't follow.

He presses his back against the wood and slides down, shirt riding up along his back. *I've messed it up. Fuck, I've messed it up.*

What the hell was that?

I can't. I can't do it. I can't be that close to him, it's too much. And now he's probably sitting out there thinking I don't want him. Especially after this whole day, I've been acting so fucking weird. Fuck, what am I meant to do? I can't tell him I want to kiss him, because I can't. I don't think I could handle that. Could I? Has a vampire ever even tried to?

He presses his face into his hands, rubbing at his eyes until he sees pools of color, making his vision blurry when he opens them again.

What the hell have I gotten myself into?

Healing Wounds

Chapter Notes

we got some fanart from @okkariko on instagram so thats super cool <3 we really appreciate all your love and support !! i love reading all your comments even if i don't reply to all of them its so sweet :']

Warnings for chapter 7: swearing, minor homophobia, blood, panicking/panic attacks
enjoy :D

What was that?

The air had never felt so suffocating before. The bright blanket of stars in the sky hang above George as he remains on the roof, finding that he can't will himself. He wonders that if the stars could speak, if they would be making fun of him for what just happened. The hill his roof overlooks sits motionless, it's likely just struck midnight at this point. They'd sat there for an hour before...the *thing* happened. George had hoped that the silence for the first half-hour would solve their problems, and that it would somehow communicate that George may be confused by Dream sometimes, he just wanted to be near him.

Honestly, that would be enough communication to carry him for a long time.

Just as he thought he had Dream figured out that he really did like George in the way he liked Dream, the idiot had to go and do something again to throw him off track.

So... did Dream change his mind? Or maybe he just wants to flirt, but doesn't actually want anything from him? Is that why he backed away?

Did I do something to mess it up? Does he hate me now?

George gasps faintly at a realization. *Is he going to leave? Is that what he's doing right now?*

He sits up, nearly slipping on the roof's incline as he scrambles to throw open the trap door and practically trips down the ladder's steps as he goes back inside, shutting out the night.

He turns and is relieved to see the blonde on the couch, his face in his hands with dirty blond strands falling over his fingers.

“Dream.” George says, voice soft.

Dream’s head snaps up.

George opens his mouth to say something, but is promptly interrupted.

“Do you want to go somewhere?”

“I- What?” George asks, puzzled. His accent seeps through.

“I just- it’s nice out, and... I was wondering if you wanted to go out for a bit.”

“It’s very late.” George pointed out, not unkindly.

“I know that I’ve been a little... unfair. Let me make it up to you. I-I’m not very good with being a better person, so I was thinking I could just show you.”

Let me make it up to you. Was this for pity, or was this because he regrets pulling away? Would it only rub salt into the wound to be alone with him after that? Maybe it wouldn’t be such a good idea, because clearly, there’s something wrong. And it might be George that’s what’s wrong.

But who would George have to talk to everyday again? Sapnap, yeah, he wouldn’t mind that after he gets home from work. But Sapnap was...Sapnap. While Dream, Dream was different. He wasn’t just someone to talk to, he had stories to tell, layers and layers of emotion to him that George had hardly begun to surface and every look into Dream only brings George closer. He was confusing, scary sometimes, but...

George doesn’t want to be alone anymore.

Like it or not, he needs Dream now.

And if Dream is still here, maybe he needs George, too.

He musters up the courage to speak again, and walks over to offer a nervous hand. "I'm sorry." Dream takes his hand, fingers brushing over his smaller palm as if he's made of thin ice, and looks up at him with an incredulous expression.

"What? Why- Why are you sorry? You didn't do anything." He stands, reminding them of their height difference. "I should be the one apologizing, George."

"Really?" George asks, relieved. "Then why- can- are you-"

"*George,*" He grips George's hand in both of his, it feels perfect. And so safe. "Please. Can we just- can we have fun? Or at least, like, just give me a chance. I'm sorry, I just can't-" Dream tightens his lips, seeming to not be able to find the right words. George rubs his thumb across the back of his hand, understanding.

"You know I want to know why." George mutters, looking down at his intertwined hand between both of Dream's larger, tanner ones. "I just...you're so- it's just hard, you know? Like, not knowing what you're thinking."

Dream breathes. "I know."

"I don't expect you to tell me everything," George mumbles, squeezing Dream's hand slightly. "I just want you to be okay."

Dream is silent for a moment, and squeezes both his hands gently in return. "I'm okay." There's a slight shake to his voice, as if he's never said something so simple before.

"Good." Their hands part slowly, and George is relieved to see Dream with a faint smile on his face as he walks over to the kitchen.

"How about a picnic?"

A picnic in the middle of the night was definitely a dumb idea. And maybe this was dumb. The copious amount of tripping over the sidewalk George endured on the walk to the park probably proved that.

That was okay, though.

Strangely, even though the air should be tense between them, George felt calmer and more at peace than he ever had before. Not many words were exchanged between them on the way over, save for some of Dream's comments on how George should be more careful where he's stepping and how the town felt so dead once all the lights were out and brick-walled shops were closed for the night. It was nice to hear him talk about such mundane things. Usually George despised that - pointless conversation was just that, pointless.

But honestly, George loves Dream most when he's just talking about nothing. Even if it was just about how he could see the stars better away from the streetlamps, or complaining about how the collar of his shirt was too tight and was 'choking him to death'. All that talk about things so normal made things feel better. *Normal*.

And even if George couldn't have Dream, that'd be okay.

He'll love him anyways.

And right now, he's in his life. That's all that matters.

"You okay?" Dream's soft voice brings George's attention back to real time, and notices Dream is looking down at him with a worried face and a hand slightly reaching out for his shoulder, but not touching him, as if he's scared to.

"What?"

"You just...kinda looked like you were thinking."

George stands up a bit straighter, matching the stride of Dream's walk with his own (with slight difficulty, thanks to the idiot's long ass legs). "Yeah, yeah, I'm good." George smiles, and finds comfort in knowing that the statement was actually true. "I'm glad we're doing this."

"Really?" Dream asks, fidgeting with the picnic basket handle between his fingers. "That's great- I mean, I'm glad that...you're not mad."

"Mad?" George asks, as if he doesn't know what he'd be referring to. "Why would I be mad?"

"Ugh," Dream slows to a stop as they enter the park's archway, probably looking for somewhere to sit. He seems to settle on a place, and George follows as he continues walking. "I'm just- this is so annoying."

"Dream," George dares to place a hand on Dream's left shoulder blade. "I'm not mad. I'm glad you're here."

The blond turns his head away sheepishly, and George relishes in knowing that he's probably the only person to bring that side out of him. "I- you're- you shouldn't say that, George, you-"

The brit rolls his eyes, putting his hand back into his pants pocket. "Calm down, jeez. I hardly complimented you, dumbass." He giggles at Dream's growing blush and offended look.

"It's just weird," Dream grumbles.

They arrive at a hill overlooking most of the park, a clear view of the fountain and intertwining rocky paths lined with various colored flowers. It's a good spot, George thinks, so he sits. Dream takes the cue to sit down across from him about a foot away, and huffs. "You're just a pussy most of the time. So it's weird when you act like that."

"Hey!" George laughs, and the other laughs with him. "Rude. I am not."

"Uh huh," Dream says sarcastically. "Well, I'm the one who always has to put the effort into this relationship."

"Relationship?" George questions.

Dream quiets, looking towards the picnic basket. After a moment George begins to take out the contents of the woven basket and lay them out.

Small cakes filled with jam, packets of crackers, bottles of soda. George begins to eat, not noticing the way Dream pretends to take bites of crackers. They make small talk, but the tension from the roof still lingers in the air. Dream lays down to admire the night sky. George lies beside him, back flat against the grass.

It almost makes him feel like a kid again, going on a picnic like this. Even if it is at two- no, three in the morning? It doesn't matter. The warm air offset by a refreshing breeze, the smell of fresh grass and the blades tickling his cheeks, the knowledge that there's nothing to immediately worry about. George thinks that this could be the first time in years he's felt like this.

And he's so happy that Dream is a part of it, too.

A few silent minutes pass. Their hands are so close. George feels inclined to intertwine them, and briefly wonders if Dream feels it too. It's almost as if there's a magnet pulling them together, and it takes all of George's strength to keep it still.

Dream yawns, resting his left hand over his mouth. Watching him, George yawns immediately after, stretching his arm above his head.

"You mimicked my yawn." Dream says.

"No I didn't. We just happened to yawn at the same time." George says, closing his eyes.

"You know that means you love me, right?" Dream sits up and hovers over the brunette, pinning his arms on either side.

"That's not what it means." George says.

"Yes, it does." Dream retaliates.

"It's just late at night, so I'm tired." George mumbles, slipping away from beneath the other, flustered.

Dream giggles. "No, you yawned *after* I yaw-"

"It only means you love the other person if you yawn *because* they yawned." George interrupts.

"That's exactly what you did!" Dream bursts into laughter, uncaring of the way his loud wheezes carry in the night air. He laughs like it's the funniest thing he's ever heard, and as soon as George

thinks he's calmed down he begins to laugh harder.

"It's- it's not even that funny!" George starts laughing, too. Dream's dumb wheezes were so contagious. "I'm serious-" Dream only laughs harder at George's comments, and throws his head back as he places a hand in the grass for stability. George takes the opportunity to admire him, his squinting eyes and dorky, yet handsome smile, his teeth so white.

Now that he looked, Dream's canine teeth were a little sharper than normal ones.

George's laughter suddenly dies out, heart thudding in his chest. Dream keeps laughing, though.

His teeth.

Those look like almost...sharp.

George holds a hand up to his neck involuntarily.

Could he...?

No.

But as he keeps looking, Dream finally calming and settling into occasional giggles, it becomes only more obvious.

Those aren't just teeth.

They're fangs.

George's smile disappears completely.

Maybe he just has sharp canines. Yeah. It's attractive, anyways.

Dream can't be a vampire. He's so nice, so caring, so *human*. He was way too careful and considerate, it'd be ridiculous to think he'd be one of those- those *things*. He was a little unusual sometimes, yeah, but he was normal. Except for times when...

Times when they were close together. Sometimes he would act weird. The night at the garden, when they were so close to closing the distance between them...was that not because of the tension between them? Or was it...

Because Dream was thinking about sucking the blood from his lips.

"George?"

George doesn't bother to move his body at all when he looks back at Dream. He knows his face is blank, color drained from his face.

What if I've been crushing over a vampire this whole time.

He sees how Dream's cheeks were still rosy with laughter, and his eyes were bright with the normal teasing joy. His teasing suddenly didn't seem as playful or lighthearted. The smile that used to make his heart swell now made it turn inside out agonizingly, and the butterflies in his stomach flew into his chest, beating their wings wildly against his ribcage. His heart was beating so fast he was surprised it didn't give out right then and there.

George knew his eyes were wide, but he couldn't bring himself to blink.

"George...? Hello, anyone there?" His name rings from Dream's lips, now seeming like a stranger's words. A stranger's false promises of security. Furrowed brows masking a lack of authenticity.

Was it all a lie? Am I nothing but a meal to him? Why would he stay around so long, he has no reason to. Maybe he has a sick satisfaction from all this, maybe I'm just a toy to him. If I'm just his steak, maybe this is the marination. Perhaps he's enjoyed the hoops he sent me through, putting me under so much emotional turmoil...messing with my heart, messing with my head. The only logical explanation is that Dream is torturing me if it's true. It can't be true.

He wants to believe these thoughts are intrusive, he wants to believe that he's wrong to think any of that and that Dream would *never* hurt him. But the more he begins to think about Dream's behavior, the more things seem to make sense. By the time his train of thought goes off the rails, he feels like throwing up.

There's suddenly a touch to his knuckles. He pulls away abruptly, the breath that had been caught in his throat now escaping in a short gasp. The concern shown in Dream's slightly parted lips makes it all worse.

"Hey," Dream tries. "Are you..." He trails off, treading lightly around speaking to George like he was an eggshell with cracks already in it, waiting for something to break it.

"Don't touch me." The muttered words come out of George's mouth before he can stop them.

Dream initially shows a twinge of pain in his eyes, but it quickly turns to frustration. "What? What did I do?" Though not necessarily aggressive, the tone in his voice makes George spiral further.

What am I going to do? Is he going to kill me? Was that his plan tonight, or when did he plan on doing it? How long is he going to pull me along before he tears my throat open? How many nights has he wanted to do it? How did I not see it before?

George forces himself to breathe out.

I have to say something to him. If I'm right, not responding is going to make things worse.

"Sorry," He finally mutters. He swallows. "I just, um...your joke reminded me of something else. Something sad."

"Oh," Dream's argumentative tone drops, turning empathetic in an instant. "I-I'm sorry. I didn't mean to upset you, that's...not fun."

As if he would know. George's thoughts scrape. *Blood suckers don't go through shit.*

"Yeah, it's okay." He says simply. He knows he should give a more convincing reply, but he can't

bring anything beyond empty words to leave his mouth. "I'm better now."

"That's...good?" Dream's gaze narrows the slightest bit. "You sure?" He leans forwards, and George flinches and leans away. He must look incredibly suspicious at this point.

"Yes." George forces out.

Dream's once beautiful face becomes sour to him.

He can't be a vampire. He can't. He can't, I can't accept that. He cares about me. I know that, all of the times where we were alone...where I dumped my heart out to him...he felt something, too, right? He had to.

For him to be a vampire, he'd be sick. Not just like the normal ones that I kill here and there, at least they kill their prey quickly.

If Dream was a vampire, then this was torture. He stuck around me, and played with my emotions, just to see what he could get out of it. He would have to find it funny. It would all- none of it would be real.

I can't deal with this here.

"I-I think I'm going to head home." George says slowly, throat burning with the urge to cry.

Dream looks him up and down. George feels scrutinized. "Was it something I did? 'Cause if it was, I-"

"No, no. I-It wasn't." George hurriedly says, clearing his throat. "I just have some work tomorrow. And I'd prefer if I woke up earlier than midday."

Dream's eyebrows lower at the word "working", but his tone remains amicable. "Alright, I get it."

You get it. George wants to roll his eyes. You don't get it. Nobody does. Nobody ever has. He

doesn't bother to say goodbye as he gathers the leftover food and blanket into his basket, and begins walking down the hill and back towards town.

"Bye, George." He hears behind him. His heart twists inwards on itself. He walks faster. Thankfully, Dream doesn't bother to follow him.

His walk home goes by in empty silence, he trips a couple times over his own shoes and bumps into the sides of darkened buildings when he isn't looking. Light posts pass in his peripheral vision as reminders that he's still walking upright. The only thing carrying him to his house is muscle memory, as his thoughts travel on autopilot.

He closes the creaky front door behind him with a soft click.

The silence in his house suddenly becomes very obvious, and it hits him.

He's alone.

No obnoxious laughter, no words or touches that would make his face burn no matter how many times he received them, nothing.

Nothing but horrible, familiar silence.

The last time he came home like this was when he first moved in. At least, the last time it had felt this empty. It was the day after he was kicked out.

"We've tried being reasonable, George." His mother had said. She was always dressed in formal attire you would often only see at expensive wine parties, even around the house she kept up the personality. It must've been exhausting to look like that all the time. It was certainly exhausting for George to grow up with. His father stood silent and complacent, as always behind her. Though a stern figure, it always seemed like his mother made many of the calls in their marriage. How the two of them ever loved each other was a mystery to George. *"But all you've done to work with us is go out all the time. Other boys your age-"*

"I'm 17." George had interrupted her. He remembered feeling so condescended towards, especially after he was hurt. As if he couldn't possibly manage a life outside of breathing for himself, and couldn't be trusted with the most basic of responsibilities. *"Not a boy."*

“Fine. Other men your age have normal lives, go out with friends! Try dating some girls, why don’t you? Plenty of women would love to have you.”

George had grumbled to himself quietly for the millionth time. They’d had that argument so many times. Even after he had told his parents about not being interested in girls, they seemed to never really accept it. It wasn’t real to them. It was like they wanted to pretend like it didn’t even happen. It was pretty much the same with the attack a few months prior to the argument. If it wasn’t addressed, it would go away.

“What I do is my business. I have to go out to that forest.”

“You have to take hold of your life. Let yourself be normal, George. Enough of your martyr nonsense, you’re just one person.”

“I can’t be normal, mum.” George groaned .

“Oh, quit that.” His mother rolled her eyes. *“Of course you can, you just have to go meet some people, if you’d let yourself go and-”*

“I CAN’T!” George snapped. His voice had peaked at a painfully high volume with instability traced between his yells. His mother flinched, because he had never raised his voice like that before. George hated yelling, really, but it had just been so long. Too much time for words of passive aggressive discouragement and neglect to build up into a volcano that was finally boiling over the edge. So he let the words burn his tongue. It hurt, but it felt so right. *“I can’t! I can’t help that I’m- that I’m gay, I can’t help that all people are idiots, I can’t change the fact that-”* He stopped himself sharply, taking in a fuming inhale and clenched his fists so hard that his nails would leave imprints in his palms. The taken back expression on his mother’s indignant, snooty face was one he had longed to see. It was about time he got a point across. *“I can’t change that I was almost killed by a goddamn vampire! So, sorry if I’m a little ..out of the ordinary for you.”*

There was something growing inside of George, something aching to be nurtured. A need to be validated and loved. They had stomped on it without meaning to, crushed right into the earth it's trying to grow out of. That’s where it all started, now that he thinks about it 7 years later. That’s when he knew he had no hope of really finding peace. No hope of finding love, and not just the romantic kind.

It was the need to be held, the need to be silently reassured with a hand in his, the need for

someone to know when he is upset without him saying anything, and to simply make him smile.

That was when he'd given up on it all. He should've known that it had to stay that way.

"George." His father had said sternly. His mother looked offended at George's words. That made him angrier than anything, he remembered. She had no right to be offended by the truths she refused to acknowledge. His father had taken a step towards him, their eye level even with each other. George's firm, emotional face didn't falter. His lips were stuck in a tight line, cheekbones high with a clenched jaw. George remembers the deep voice of his father - much deeper than his own would ever be. Though a protective veil in some situations, it often just reminded him of how he didn't live up to the perfect son they had in mind. *"After raising you in a comfortable home, never going hungry, always having a roof over your head, you repay us like this?"*

George had stared him right in the eyes as he spoke. *"I don't owe you shit."*

George was given ten minutes to collect his belongings and leave. He didn't allow himself to look back even once.

The memory only makes George's vision worse. Watery blur fills all edges of his vision. He doesn't have the energy to wipe it away. His head is cotton, fingers numb, everything's muffled but so loud.

He throws his shoes off at the doormat, not bothering to straighten them like he usually does. He shuffles past his kitchen in his socks, holding his arms and staring at his feet on the cold, rigid wood floor. He walks through his bedroom doorway, and leans back on the door to close it. His body thumps against the wood.

A couple of shallow whimpers escape his throat, his lips tighten together. And finally, sobs pour out of him. His knees shake and give out, his shirt drags against the door as he crouches to his carpet floor.

All of the emotional frustrations of the past days clump into one ball, and are indiscernible from each other. So he doesn't try to discern between them. He just cries.

"Fuck." He croaks to the empty air. He's met with silence.

After however many minutes of his face buried in his knees, he leans his head back against the door, and attempts to sniff away his cries and settle his breathing. It doesn't do much good.

It'll never get easier, will it? I'm just going to have a shitty fucking life. Can't have one good thing. Should've known.

Dream was supposed to be good. The one good thing he could have and not have it taken from him or messed up somehow.

It could still be that way. I don't know for sure.

Maybe he just has sharp canine teeth.

...

I know that's just an excuse.

He doesn't want to have to live in his own head anymore, but the more he tries to distract himself, the more he sees Dream's wide, toothy grin with each blink. He scrambles to his feet and into the bathroom, bumping into his wall on the way, where he's met with his hardly visible reflection in the mirror.

Now that he thought about it, he'd never seen Dream stand in front of a mirror. Or any reflective surface, actually. Then again, he'd never asked Sapnap to stand by one, either.

This is stupid.

He opens his mouth and looks at his own teeth, carefully running his fingers over the places there should be fangs on a vampire. His teeth are dull and square, entirely human. He tries to picture Dream's in his mind so he can compare.

Is it possible that Dream just has sharp teeth? Maybe it's just a coincidence that he always leans into my neck. Comments on my scent. Never comes by during the daylight. Has never stood in front of a mirror. Has he eaten human food in front of me?

He's spiraling further and further into madness, the paranoia plagues every thought that passes through his mind. He feels like he's going to pass out, but he can't stop it.

It can't be true. I'm not going to let it be true, Dream cares about me. Dream does care. He does...he helped me when I was hurt.

I can't let the world take this from me, too.

When he was hurt. I was bleeding...did he smell it? Maybe that's the only reason he came to visit. Maybe he could smell the blood from the forest, and it just happened to be me again. But then why wouldn't he just take me when I was vulnerable? That'd be so much easier.

He likes to play with me.

George's hands hold the counter's edge with a deadly grip. His fingers turn white.

I can't do this. I can't.

His grip lessens. He lets a shaky sigh escape him as he leans away from the mirror. A heavy, single tear drops onto the counter with a light patter as it hits the marble.

I trust him. I don't trust people. I gave him that, I let him hold that power over me. Now I've fucked it all up. This is what I get. This is what I get for trusting someone.

He closes his eyes. His lashes stick together.

He wishes that he could be anywhere but here right now, to be anyone but him. This would all be so much easier to think about if he just wasn't himself.

I need to calm down. He stumbles back over to his bed, and collapses onto it. He doesn't bother to move from the fetal position he lands in. His face has been scrunched up for so long that it aches. More wet, hot tears creep out of his eyes in silence, and leave small damp spots on his pillowcase.

He can't stop thinking about it, so he doesn't stop thinking about it. He wants to sleep so badly, pray that it was all some sick and twisted nightmare that had mixed his worst fear with his source of comfort, but the sleep never comes.

Sunlight peeks through George's window. It reminds him that yes, time is still passing. And yes, he didn't get a single second of shuteye.

His hair clings to his forehead and eyes dry and red from tears, making his skin feel parched. All of his sheets lie on the floor, a result of restless kicking and lack of care to pick them up despite his cold room. He doesn't deserve the blankets, anyways. He curls up further with a loud sigh.

Eventually he forces himself out of bed and into the washroom to get ready for the dreadful day ahead.

His tea tastes bitter, suddenly his living room feels too empty, the house too quiet, the blue decorations are an obnoxious reminder of him. Seemingly everything is. He hates himself for wanting to build a little blanket fort with *him*.

He knows what he wants to do.

Pouring out his tea in the sink, he proceeds to pack for a day of hunting. A process he's done a million times over, allowing his brain to enter auto pilot as he does the only thing he knows how to do. Vampire hunting never left, never lied, never hurt him in ways that he didn't know how to deal with. It was the one thing that he knew in his life was true - that he was doing *good* for the world.

It's bittersweet when people try to love George. He always lets people get close to him, only to lose them or be pushed away suddenly. He closed himself off all these years after being kicked out, with his only exception being Sapnap. He spirals, asking himself how he could *possibly* let his guard down after all this time to some random guy he met at a party. It felt like such a long time ago, that party.

It doesn't take long to haphazardly throw together a bunch of traps into his backpack and sling it over his shoulders, almost too heavy for him to stand upright, but he doesn't care. The click of his door sounds farther away than normal when he closes it behind him, the sun feels less comforting

on his skin than it usually does, instead feeling the biting breeze on his skin that he pays no attention to. If anyone had seen him trudging down the gravel path to the forest in his probably disheveled-looking state, they didn't make themselves known. *People know I'm not normal already. What's the harm in adding to the rumors? Most of them hardly bother to speak to me, anyways.*

The dark, looming canopy greets him with deafening silence. He huffs, blowing hair out of his face.

George stalks his way down a familiar path worn into the forest floor, mapping it in his mind as he makes his way around the maze of thick trees. Dirt shifts under his boots with each step, he pays attention to the rhythmic noise as if it's the only thing that matters for the moment. There's a quiet hum of insects and distant bird call that surrounds him, easing his stress slightly.

The deep blues of the deep forest used to frighten him, (frankly, it would be frightening to anyone in their right mind), but he'd grown to associate it with a sense of purpose.

These sticks splitting beneath his shoes, his knowledge to avoid kicking around rocks that could make too much noise, the occasional yellow light that dances on the forest floor when it manages to leak through the layers of leaves - it was all in a place that George could change something about the world. He didn't necessarily *like* it, but it just felt right.

He allows the forest to submerge him as he finally walks in far enough to avoid seeing any man-made buildings. The forest air is light, the deep brown earth morphs around his boots. He looks around and admires the evergiving forest, watching a small rodent scurry by him. George slumps.

I'm really out vampire hunting after finding out my crush might be a vampire. George slows to a stop, and looks up at the variety of deep and light greens surrounding thick branches. *Kind of ironic.* He laughs emptily to himself.

I miss when it was just Dream being stupid. Maybe that's all it still is, and I just over thought all of this.

He looks back in the direction he came from with a regretful feeling starting to boil inside his chest. *Even if I'm wrong, I still left in such a weird way. I need this, still. I need time.* He assures himself with a long exhale. *Maybe I'll be welcomed when I get back with Dream's arms open, ready to hold me again. Forgiving me for jumping to conclusions. And he'll make another dumb joke. And I'll hate it, but I'll laugh. Because I always laugh. He always makes me laugh.*

A blue jay flits by in the blink of an eye, and dashes quickly into the woods ahead and disappears as quickly as it came. George darkens. *If I were him, I'd be mad. Walking out on him like that. He must be confused. If he's not a- if I'm wrong, I just fucked up our friendship.*

George blinks harshly, and brushes the hair on his forehead back a little too hard and breathes. *I came out here to distract myself. And that's what I'm going to do.* He takes another step, into the depths of the woods.

Once he reaches the heart of the woods, a place so dark that even at midday, no light can reach it, he digs some material out of his bag, setting it down on the ground. He yanks out the first thing he sees that he apparently threw into his bag, a matted up rope net with some fraying edges, worn with use, but still tough as hell. He finds himself smiling. *This will definitely make me feel better. I'm doing a good thing by doing this. And I'm good at it.*

He hooks the rope over the top of a young tree, watching it bend slightly. The net rests on the ground in a ring, ensuring whoever steps inside will be caught in the large net and hooked onto the tree. It was one of his favorite traps to set, even if it did sometimes take a while to catch anything, let alone an actual vampire. It saved him a lot of the hassle of chasing or fighting, which he wasn't particularly the best at.

He sits on the ground with a huff, out of sight from the trap behind a boulder, but close enough so he can hear when it's thrown into action by an unsuspecting victim.

He rests his eyes, leaning against the stony surface of the large rock. *Maybe when I go back, I can tell Dream how I caught a vampire and saved more lives today. Maybe he'll be proud of me.* George opens his eyes, and catches himself. *No. No thinking about Dream, this is your time. Take the distraction, just for a while. Deal with it later.*

George shifts to get more comfortable, bringing his knees to his chest. *I just wish things could go back to normal. Before I had evidence of some guy I spend every day with now being a vampire, things I literally hunt for some sort of purpose. I just want normal again.*

As *normal* as they could be anyway, with Dream. He missed those butterflies he'd get. The simple things, even just brushing his knuckles against his arm was enough to make him stop breathing for a moment. But when it was more, *God*, that's what he missed most. Enveloped in his arms, his smaller figure almost completely covered by Dream's outstretched arms.

He's shaken from his spinning thoughts when a loud yelp pierces the quiet air, making him jump. He takes a second to catch his breath from the surprise.

Got one.

He's quick to get to his feet, rushing to check on his trap.

However, nothing can prepare him for what he sees next. He steps into view of the hanging net and immediately, the color drains from his face, heart shattering on the spot.

This was quite possibly the worst thing that could've happened right now.

There, caught in the net, is Dream; his limbs are hunched together to fit his tall figure in the trapped space. His hair is a mess, more than usual, all over the place and falling over his eyes. His pupils are constricted, a bloody rabbit in his hand, blood on his cheek and dripping from his lips.

To see Dream in such a raw, animalistic state was horribly jarring.

He feels like someone punched him in the stomach, knocking the wind out of him. He swallows, throat feeling raw.

"Dream..?"

Basking in the Sunlight

Chapter Notes

this one's a little shorter than usual but its plot heavy! anyway sorry for not updating on wednesday we were both pretty busy <3 but theres some pretty great stuff coming up in the future of this fic so stay tuned...hehe

Warnings for chapter 8: violence, blood, swearing, crying, panicking, manipulation(?)
enjoy :D

Things could be going a little bit better for George right now.

After leaving so suddenly the day before, having just a bit of an existential crisis, and then swearing to himself that what he saw was almost definitely him overreacting, that Dream probably just had sharper canine teeth. *I'll explain myself later*, George had told himself. *This was probably all in my head. Yeah. We'll talk again, and it'll be fine.*

George just didn't expect his talk with Dream to be in the middle of a forest, staring up at the lanky blond caught in a vampire net with blood dripping from his hands.

George's words, heavy with dread, make his chest clench and feel as if he's going to explode. "Dream..?"

Dream doesn't respond.

The lack of reply makes George want to believe it's all in his head. He tries again.

There was no way his eyes were working correctly right now. Nope. This was not happening. Dream had a reason for this. He had to. "What are you doing out here?"

The blond just stares at him, uncomfortably shifting in the half-sitting position with his legs awkwardly bent to his chest, before finally parting his bloodied lips. "Geo-"

"What is that?" George interrupts shakily, pointing to the dead rabbit in his hand.

The silence swarms them like angry bees, air thick and hard to swallow. The forest is quiet, save for the sound of the pairs heavily increasing breaths.

“I’m.. just hunting.” Dream tries, eyes flicking back and forth from George to the dead rabbit in his hands. “I-I didn’t bite this! It’s bloody because I killed it. and- and then i slipped. A-And I fell on it. With my mouth.” Dream’s words grow more unsure and frantic as he continues to explain himself, George can almost see the embarrassment in Dream’s face as he continues. “I wouldn’t- I don’t- that’s *gross*, I-”

George swallows. “You’re a vampire, aren’t you?”

A moment of silence hangs in the air between them. It feels like the world stops moving.

“Vampire?” Dream lets slip a weak and humorless laugh. “No. I’m- I’m not a vampire.”

It all makes sense. All the times he’s never eaten human food in front of me. He always played it off and pretended he was sick. He keeps leaning in, smelling my neck, and hesitating when he gets too close to me. In the park, in my kitchen, in my bed.

George’s mind makes so many connections a second that it’s enough to cause a headache.

He burns in the sun, that’s why he keeps the living room dark. Maybe that’s why he built the fort. He doesn’t have a house because he lives in the woods. Ever since that stupid masquerade party he’s just been trying to get a taste of me. Of course he didn’t comfort me that night because he actually cared.

He did it because he wanted to kill me.

I was right.

The thought makes him nauseous. There’s a kind of pain in his chest that he’s never felt before. Is it possible to be so upset and scared and *frustrated* that your body could explode? George thinks he could do that right about now.

How could he let himself be taken advantage of?

Dream had started talking at some point while he was thinking. “-hy would I pursue you all this time? It doesn’t make sense. That’s... Just ridiculous.” He’s gently picking at the fur of the rabbit in his palm, almost as if it was a toy to fidget with.

George swallows dryly. “Okay.”

“Okay?” Dream offers a small, tense smile.

George carefully draws a sharpened silver blade from his bag, stepping towards the net Dream is trapped in. His expression quickly shifts to panic.

“W-What are you doing? George? George please, I-”

He snatches one of the thick ropes, pulling the caged man towards him. In one swipe he cuts the net down from the tree with the blade, letting go of the rope and watching Dream fall to the ground on his back with a thud.

George backs away as Dream untangles himself from the ropes, tossing the rabbit into a nearby bush in the process. It leaves only red remnants of the animal on his fingers. He offers a relieved smile, running a hand through his awfully disheveled hair. It stains a clump of strands red. “God- I thought you were gonna hurt me with that.”

George doesn’t respond. He would only feel more guilty, knowing what’s to come. He carefully wraps a hand around the grip of his gun. “Stay back.” He warns.

“What?”

“I said. Stay. Back.”

In a swift motion the gun is whipped into the open view. The sight of it is jarring, he practically startles himself with the weapon now in his hand and pointed directly at the vampire. They’re mere inches from touching, a shot aimed at the chest of any creature at this distance would certainly mean death.

“A *gun*? ” Dream’s eyes widen. “W-Why? I’m not dangerous, we just-”

“I-” George nearly chokes as he steadies his voice. *Calm. When a vampire sees you panic, they’ll attack mercilessly. My life is at risk right now.* “I’m just taking precautions.”

“But-” Dream leans forward, and George responds by meeting his chest with the gun’s barrel, keeping a straight face. Though it was a probably very pained, stressed out, and unsteady straight face.

“George,” Dream softly breathes, and it makes George sick. That tone, he used it when he wanted to make George feel better. It was manipulation, he sees it now. “You know I wouldn’t hurt you, c’mon.”

“You hurt that rabbit pretty bad.” George scolds, glaring in disgust at the large hands soaking in rabbit blood.

“What?” Dream asks, a mixture of panic and offense. “I- it was- I was gonna clean it for later-”

“It’s fine.” George deadpans. “I believe you.”

George feels the barrel of his gun shift with every shaky breath Dream takes, and allows himself to hover a finger over the trigger. *Would now be the time? Should I take the opportunity now?* George looks up again, and meets Dream’s eyes.

There’s no denying that they aren’t human eyes he’s looking at. They’re dilated, similar to that of a cat when it sees a mouse, and they nearly glow with vibrance and intensity. No matter how human the person behind them sounds, it isn’t a human.

Dream is a vampire.

He keeps the gun pointed at Dream’s torso, hands trembling. He swallows the sob threatening to escape his throat. “Follow me.” He says.

“You believe me, don’t you?” Dream asks, voice quiet and cracking.

He sounds scared.

George hates the way it makes him feel a twinge of guilt.

“I do.” He lies. “Just.. do what I say, okay?”

There’s a pause. George doesn’t have a plan, he doesn’t know what to do from here.

Why did I free him? Should I shoot? He feels nauseous at the thought. I can’t kill him. Why can’t I kill him? He was planning to kill me, I know it. Should I run?

His thoughts are an endless tornado, wrecking any rational thoughts train of thought. He thinks he might faint trying to calm the storm while deciding what to do about the man standing in front of him.

Suddenly, Dream shoves the barrel of the gun to the left.

In a moment of panic, George pulls the trigger.

The silver bullet immediately pierces Dream’s right shoulder, ripping a horrible scream from his throat, erupting the muscle in his shoulder in a violent flinch. The sound of the shot rings throughout the quiet forest, sending a wave of sound out loud enough to scare away nearby nesting birds. George inhales sharply and turns in an instant, dashing away from the now-injured vampire and nearly tripping over his own feet as he scrambles back. His breath shortens as his right hand grips a tree for stability.

Dream clutches his bleeding shoulder and heaves in loud breaths, struggling to stand back up. *I did that. Fuck. Fuck. I shot him. What the fuck did I do?*

Dream looks up with a pained expression, lips parted and brows furrowed. His eyes showed a genuine pain in them that George never knew was able to be brought out of the man.

“You...” Dream rasps out, and inhales sharply again at the pain in his shoulder. He bares his teeth in pain, no longer needing to hide the fangs; he knows they’re in too deep. He breathes in, and forces his next words out the best he can. “Y-You shot me. You- You fucking shot me.” He nearly hisses with the words.

Fuck. "I'm-" George tries, but the words die on his tongue. *Do I say sorry? But he's out here, he tried to push my gun away.*

George swallows the cotton in his throat, and speaks slowly and carefully. "Why did you push my gun away, then? If you're *so* innocent?"

Dream breathes out, so deep that it almost sounds like a growl. "Because, *fuck-*" Dream winces in agony. "Because you pointed it at me, dumbass." He manages to stagger to a standing position, though leaning to his right with a death grip still on his bullet wound. It was disorienting to see him in such a position, Dream had always been so strong. He could easily brush off anything.

And now that same man was standing in front of him with a bleeding shoulder.

It's because he doesn't get hurt like other people. George realizes with regret. *I was so blind.*

George takes a step back. Dream's eyes widen.

"George-"

"No," George mutters out. He takes another step back, the leaves crunching beneath his shoe. "Don't say my name."

Dream opens his mouth to speak again, but he's stopped by another surge of pain. He tries again. "I'm sorry. I-I know.. This looks bad, but-"

"Stop it." George pleads. "Please, just stop."

Dream stops talking, watching silently as George's emotions begin to fester and swarm him.

The brunette gasps for air, chest feeling like it's being crushed. His panic comes out in short and dry sobs, hands around the gun shaking. He lets go to wipe a tear from his cheek.

It appears he spaces out for a moment, because when the world comes back into focus, Dream is right in front of him. The blond carefully reaches a tender hand out to touch George's shoulder.

This results in a violent flinch, as George pulls away in an instant. "Don't touch me!"

Dream's grip falters as he pulls back. He thinks back to all the times they'd been physically close or intimate with one another. Brushing of hands, hugs, *cuddling*. George shivers. *I'm lucky I'm not dead right now. How could I let this happen?*

"George," Dream reaches out again, but George backs up in time to be out of reach. "George, *please*."

When Dream takes another step towards him, George brings his gun up again to point at Dream, only to notice the barrel is bent nearly in half. "What the-" George feels all the color drain from his face. "What did you *do*?"

Dream's eyes widen at seeing the bent metal. "Oh, I-I didn't mean to! I'm sorry, It must be faulty or somethi-"

George drops the gun, seeing as it's completely useless at this point, and starts backing away with more urgency. "*Fuck*." He whispers, mostly to himself.

"Just wait!" Dream strains, clenching his teeth at another shock of pain in his shoulder. Regardless, he takes two steps towards George. "Listen to me!"

I'm defenseless. George can hardly breathe. *I'm defenseless and he knows I'm onto him.*

I'm dead.

I have no way out of this.

And yet, even though he had given up on living already, resolving to a painful and meaningless existence, George still ran. Even with all of the bad memories, the failed relationships, and worthless friendships, he still had a reason to run. To run for his one real friend, Sapnap. To run for

all the times he was happy, he was sad, he was angry and even when he felt nothing.

And he ran to live. Even though, at this point, George doesn't think life is worth living.

Yet, he ran.

The air is so cold it bites. The wind is so loud it screams. The sun growing brighter the closer he gets to the outside is too bright. *I'll die before I get there*, he thinks. *It's okay. At least I get to see the sun one more time.*

When he collapses in the grass, sunlight washing over him as he breaks away from the shadows of the forest, he's not sure whether it's actually Earth he's still on.

Though he would love to bask in the silence of light, the world calls again in the form of loud, halting footsteps behind him.

He's still alive.

He jerks up to a sitting position, panting wildly and face wet with tears.

Still alive.

And there he stands, that dumbass.

Dream stands on the edge of a tree's silhouette, one hand hesitantly raised at his side as if he wants to reach out, the other still death gripping his shoulder. It seems he's just as out of breath as George is. Whether that's from running, emotions, or agony, it doesn't matter much at this point.

"Come back." Dream says, a look of what George would almost mistake for true desperation if he didn't know better. "Please, just.. Come back."

"Why? Can't you just step into the sun?" George huffs bitterly, standing up and brushing the grass off his lap.

Dream doesn't reply, instead looking timidly into the sun outside his shaded haven.

"You can't." George scowls. "I knew it."

Dream looks to meet his eyes, staring into George's with those cursed pupils. He parts his lips to speak, eyes watering with tears.

"I'm sorry." He says, voice gentle and smooth like honey.

"You're *sorry*?" George snaps. "You were going to bite me! At the town square when we first met, when we got ice cream, when we were cooking, in *my* house and on my fucking *roof*! That's why you kept leaning in and smelling me like a fucking freak!"

Dream grimaces at each harsh word, his face growing more and more panicked with every moment. "No, no, shut up! I wouldn't do that!"

"Oh yeah?" George scorns. "You like having me around as your own personal blood bag? Were you just waiting for the best time to use me?"

"Shut up!" Dream yells furiously. "Stop it!"

"Why?" George continues, daring to take a step towards the vampire. Another step, and they'd be within arm's reach of each other. "Because you don't want to admit it?"

Dream glares at him, and with his red-stained lips, animalistic eyes, and blood-stained clothes (whether it's his own or the rabbits, George doesn't know), it's definitely not an inviting sight. His words come out through gritted teeth, nearly as a growl. "I'm not like that."

"Yeah?" George mocks. "If I held my arm out to you right now, you'd take it, wouldn't you?"

"I wouldn't." Dream's gaze darkens further.

“You’d sink your teeth in like you’ve been waiting to do since you fucking met me. You don’t have to lie about it, anymore.”

“I wouldn’t!” Dream yells, taking a step forward and immediately flinching back, yelling in pain as a harsh hiss emanates from the vampire’s arm. George took a step back, not expecting Dream to even attempt moving any closer.

The vampire clutches his arm with his unoccupied hand, glancing with bitterness at both of his injuries now, then back at George.

George swallows, regaining his composure. “Wow...you really can’t go in the sun.” He’d never seen a vampire burn up close, and didn’t realize how nasty they actually were. No wonder vampires hardly risked hunting in the day, even in the shade.

“Fuck.” Dream growls. “You.”

George breathes, taking a step back. “Bye, Dream.”

He sees the vampire nearly take another step to follow him, but stopping himself at the edge of the tree’s shadow with an annoyed scowl. “You can’t leave.”

“I can.” George says vacantly. “And don’t follow me. I’ll be ready next time.”

Before Dream can respond, George turns around, walking back towards the village without a single glance back.

Breaking Innocence

Chapter Notes

sorry for not updating yesterday :) we decided we might just deal with an inconsistent upload schedule since we're both busy so we don't find time to write. i hope that's ok! tysm for all the love on this fic its been amazing so far

this chapter is a bit short but its also plot heavy :] I'm excited for the following chapters after this, the fic gets pretty fun (and a little dark) from here

Warnings for chapter 9: violence, swearing, graphic descriptions of wounds and injuries, blood

enjoy :D

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Fate dances in the wind between each tree branch.

The air was still, the smell of wood and earth filling the forest air as the sun began to set on the horizon. The light peeked between each tree leaf and projected onto the forest floor and it's tree trunks, casting their wood in a golden light.

A certain young brunette, no older than 17, had been seated on a mossy log in sight of the forest's edge. In his gray long sleeve shirt with rolled up sleeves and dark jeans, he'd clearly been looking to enjoy the nature of his surroundings. He was fidgeting with an array of different sized mushrooms he'd picked off the forest floor, his short hair falling into his eyes as he leaned over, curiously picking off parts of each fungus as if it would suddenly turn to gold. His figure was encased in the darkness of the canopy's silhouette, the boy so unknowing to how short his alone time would last.

He was basically asking for death with how oblivious he was.

This was it. Dream was finally doing it - he was going to kill a human. It's been way too long already; 14 years old and no human blood yet? What an embarrassment. Now that he's here, lingering mere feet away from his first human prey, he realizes how stupid it was to wait so long. It won't be hard. It's such a simple, easy task for a being with supernatural strength to achieve, a small task for something that ensures some sense of place in the world.

He craves to own that place.

Dream was a vampire. And this is what that meant.

And he's accepted it.

What had he been so nervous about in the first place? This was the way the world works, and something vampires did every day. It was a little messed up, yeah. Definitely not morally acceptable from a human standard.

Good thing Dream doesn't have to live by human standards.

He crept up behind the log, leaves remaining silent beneath his feet.

One kill, and there would be no return to a conflicted life. Dream would be certain, then, it was fine to do this. All blood tasted the same, some better than others, but there had to be a reason other vampires never drank animal blood. There had to be something about human blood that was so incredible that you'd just...know. And then never turn back to the way you were.

To be honest, Dream thought it sounded kinda awesome. Older vampires certainly looked awesome.

His finger nails dig into the dirt, leaving deep, silent nail marks in the dirt.

Dream was also getting sick of never being taken seriously for being so young. Vampires aren't the most social creatures, but word sure did seem to get around when he showed up. The vampire that refused to drink human blood.

This was his moment of acceptance. Taking a human life was a small price to pay for eternal self satisfaction. And well, Dream was selfish.

With one final breath, he jumped forward and roughly grabbed the boy on the log, pulling him back by his shoulders.

The boy collided with the forest floor with a brief, shocked yell before Dream clasped his hand over the smaller's mouth, silencing the sound. This was Dream's first physical interaction with a human in a long time, and smiled smugly at how easy it was to overpower the boy, even though he was clearly older than him. Though, Dream was definitely still taller by quite a bit. Humans really were weak creatures.

He suddenly felt a warm and wet object press against his palm. Disgusted, he pulled away with an annoyed "Ew!", giving the brunet an opportunity to run.

The human scrambled to his feet with a panicked huff before being pulled down again, clawed at by his leg. He fell to the ground with a cry at the claw-like nails digging into his skin, Dream dragging him closer. Soon, the human was pinned by the vampire.

"Stop- Please stop!" He cried, eyes filling with tears. His accent broke through the choked cries. "I-I don't want to die!"

Dream's grip had faltered for a brief moment. He looked into the eyes of the human, seeing the fear in his eyes, the building tears spilling over the lids.

Fuck. Dream definitely should've done this a faster way.

"Just..." Dream growled, somewhat to himself, trying to figure out what to do. And suddenly, the scent of fresh blood floods his nose.

He's smelled it before, but wow. Up close, it was really something else. So much so that his body practically starts to move without his permission when he realizes the human managed to get up and start running again.

He clambered upwards, kicking blood-stained dirt in his haste to catch the brunette and pinning his chest to the ground with a single hand. It's as if his body is reduced to pure survival needs as his nails tear a nasty gash deep into the human's back, stretching from his shoulder to his spine at the mid back.

Dream would've grimaced at the resulting scream if the smell wasn't so intoxicating and addicting. When his hand retracts from the human, his hands are splattered in an angry scarlet red.

“Fuckfuckfuckfuckfuck-” The human babbled out in agony, clawing out for something to hold onto or use as leverage. He gasped, body wracked with shaky sobs.

Dream stopped for a moment, shaking with impulse as he stared down at his own actions.

It’s normal.

It’s fine.

Stop thinking about it.

Just as Dream manages to bare his fangs, ready to sink them in, the brunet stopped gasping in pain, and instead just started... crying.

There was no fear, it was just... sadness.

The human turns his head just enough to make eye contact. The browns of his eyes were nearly drowned out by the tears overlaying them. His eyes shimmered with the tears, glossing over.

It’s as if every bone in Dream’s body, every last bit of his soul and being was screaming, begging him to drink the blood that’s been spilled and take more. To take all of it. To not leave a single drop.

He wanted to move.

He tried to move.

But he didn’t.

“It’s okay.”

Dream flinched out of his urge-ridden daze.

What did he just say?

“Go ahead.” The human said, maintaining eye contact through sorrowful pupils, before his eyelids fell and his head collapsed lazily into the ground.

Dream couldn't breathe.

His head flooded with the look, the smell, the potential taste of the spilled red before him. If he were to stop focusing for a moment, there was no telling what his instincts would do to get that blood.

“I...” Dream croaked out, suddenly realizing that the human wasn't moving at all. His eyes widened, suddenly coming to realize what he'd just done. His head snapped up, looking around frantically, though he wasn't sure what for. Reassurance? Help? Someone to yell at him? He looked back down to the motionless body under his knee.

I...

I just killed someone. Someone so innocent. Someone begging for their life.

Dream shivered. It's okay, he told me. Go ahead.

He stares down at the body, frozen.

And then, the human's chest gently rose and fell. Dream blinked. It rose and fell again.

He was still breathing.

“Okay. Okay.” Dream whispered to himself. He just passed out from blood loss .

But he's going to die from it soon if he stays like this.

And there were all those disapproving voices coming back to Dream now. "Just finish it!" "It's easy!" "What, scared?" "It tastes better than anything." "You won't regret it."

Dream took a deep, deep breath.

He brushed a hand over the gash he left in the human's back, careful to not press in sensitive parts of the wound. The closer he got to the bloodiest parts, the more his body practically gravitates towards it, his muscles tensing with restraint.

He furrowed his brows. "No." He said. "I can't do it."

He picked the fragile body up in his arms with as much grace as he could manage. Which isn't much, considering he'd been shaking with hunger in each step forward. With the body laid across his arms, the delicious smell of blood fogged Dream's vision an almost unbearable amount.

No matter how much he salivated, no matter how much it hurt, no matter how much he needed it, he didn't give into it.

He wasn't ready yet.

Why am I doing this?

Dream huffed, blowing his dirty blond hair out of his face.

He raised his shirt corner and carefully tore a strip of cloth using his sharp teeth. Once the fabric separated, he moved to wrap it around and press it to George's bleeding wound.

He slipped his arms under the smaller torso, pressing the cloth around the cut. Blood gushed from the cut, making him wince and pull away.

He can't afford to lose more blood.

The smaller laid across his lap, head falling back, exposing his neck. Dream resisted the urge to stare, knowing if he did he might not have been able to help the urge to bite into the juicy flesh.

It was no wonder why other vampires never hesitated to just kill. It would be the easy option.

And Dream will be ready soon. Just...not yet. Not now.

He tried again. Carefully pressed against the gash, watching the cloth darken with the human blood. It quickly soaked the red, which was beginning to clot with time. He wiped away the blood around the cut, exposing the practically shredded skin. He felt the hot skin around the wound, pulsing with the brunet's weak heartbeat. His fingers involuntarily shake.

This is hard.

Dream sighed and tore one more strip of fabric and wrapped it around his torso in a messy bandage. He pulled the boy off his lap and rested his head on the forest floor, laying him down straight. He prayed that he would survive the attack, suddenly feeling the strong wave of guilt wash over him.

If he didn't survive, surely some other creature would come around to clean up after him.

With that, rose from the ground, limbs feeling like jelly, now feeling the stagnating air drift between the trees. He climbed into a tree with ease, making sure to have a proper vantage point to watch the human but to not be spotted.

Dream watched over the limp human until the sun fell as he laid unconscious, ensuring that nobody else would find him.

George startled awake, sitting up immediately, only to regret it with a sharp, dagger-like pain in his back and leg. He gasped in breaths, taking as much air as possible into his lungs as possible.

The night had fallen, ironically calm sounds of toads croaking and fireflies buzzing filled the air.

“I’m...” George held his hands out in front of himself, flipping them over, and touched his fingers together to be sure that they were real. “I’m alive.”

He blinked again, hard, in complete disbelief. Could I be dead right now? I have to be. But...this certainly doesn’t look like the afterlife. He’d been right at the foot of a large tree, within view of a main path to the village. Closer to it than when he was when...

The last thing he remembered was seeing that thing, that...vampire. And how that creature had true, murderous intent in it’s eyes, Then the awful awful pain. And then George had passed out.

How the fuck am I alive?

The brunet swallowed, and looked around cautiously and slowly, as if someone were waiting for his consciousness.

It doesn’t matter how I’m alive. *George realized.* It just matters that I *am* alive.

With great difficulty, he managed to sit up. He raised a delicate hand to trace the awful gash left in his shoulder, drying blood caking his shoulder and soaking his torn clothing. Only then had he noticed there was a cloth tied messily around his shoulder, already soaked with the blood. He tried to untie it without thinking, before wincing at the feeling of his torn skin sticking to the cloth.

Who the fuck tied this for me?

He carefully pulled himself off his knees and to his shaky feet, breathing slowly and steadily. I guess it doesn’t matter.

I’m alive.

He sighed shakily and began the run home, desperate to get some kind of aid. Up from a tree branch, a vampire watched as he ran off, making sure that he wouldn't be followed.

Dream wasn't ready yet.

Chapter End Notes

i never put ending notes for chapters but in case anyone is confused this is a flashback to when george got that rlly bad scar on his shoulder that dream did when they were younger

Chai Tea and Honey

Chapter Notes

wake up babe new love bites chapter

Warnings for chapter 10: violence, swearing, panicking/panic attacks

enjoy :D

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

It's cold.

It's so cold it hurts. It hurts Dream's fingers to run over the water's surface. The trickle of the fountain rings in his ears like an explosion, despite being barely audible. Each drip, each splash on his skin, each wave rippling from the stream of water at the top, it all begins to consume him and eat him whole as his mind begins to cloud like the sky.

It's been a long time since he's come to this fountain. The last time it was like this— dead of night, only the sound of water, nobody outside— must've been when he first turned.

A young teen boy, stumbling through the woods, starving, bleeding from the neck, but not dead. That's what he had been. Dream remembered thinking the fountain could wash his wounds.

The fountain was in town. Someone in town would understand.

Except when that happened, there was someone at the fountain.

It was his mother. Mourning her lost child in the center of the village at midnight, head in her hands. Dream remembered approaching her, so relieved. He thought she would be, too.

Needless to say, though, his mom wasn't very relieved once she didn't see his reflection in the fountain.

He never saw her again after that.

The wind feels more bitter all of the sudden. Dream doesn't move, though. He doesn't feel he deserves the comfort of warmth as he lifts his head to the sky with tired eyes.

The only light left, all the time, was the moon. The moon is the same no matter where you are.

I wonder what the chances are that George is looking at the moon right now, too.

Looking down from the sky, he stares into the water, nearly black with the reflecting night sky. Like always, he's met with no reflection. Deep down he yearns to see his own face again. *Maybe I wouldn't like what I see. No matter what I look like, I'd be a monster. Maybe it's better I don't have a face to put myself to.*

Dream's fingers curl and tighten into a fist.

Why did I have to become a goddamn vampire? Life is just one big, cruel joke, isn't it?

His heart rate spikes, suddenly, rage filling him like lava flowing through his veins. His pupils constrict, directionless anger quickly erupting.

Doesn't matter what I am, vampire or human. I've never done anything right.

Before he can even register his own actions, he plunges a fist into the fountain's stone with years of pent up rage, suffering and hurt behind it.

The entire top of the fountain collapses with a loud crash, rubble flying with the collision and water splashing outwards. He grips the edge of the pool at the bottom and breaks off a chunk of stone, forcing more to crack. Coins and water spill onto the street.

Dream breathes heavily, teeth bared as he stares at the mess of collapsed fountain remnants at his feet.

He lets out an inappropriate laugh, combing his hair back with a dirty hand. *What the hell did I just do?*

“HEY!”

He turns around and looks to the source of the noise. A group of men stand behind him, one gripping the handle of a long, silver pitchfork. *I shouldn't have made a scene. This was definitely stupid.*

Fuck.

The moment of silence only lasts a moment before Dream's on his feet, running like his life depends on it (because it does).

They chase after him, pursuing him like a pack of savage wildcats chasing an antelope. Screams and roaring of angry townspeople follow behind him a little too close for comfort as he dodges between shop stands and building alleyways. Agility is one of the few things he's thankful for after being bitten. At least he wouldn't have to deal with the stress of dying today, too.

Dream's breath is burdensome, chest heaving with every step. His body feels worn out after using his strength to break the town's center piece. He can still hear footsteps behind him as he runs to the edge of the town, through the gate and into the forest. His footsteps are loud and heavy, he winces slightly every time he brushes up against a tree trunk with his fucked up shoulder, loud huffs escaping his tired lungs.

He finally stops and manages to catch his breath, now deep into the breathing woods. He looks towards the town, but there's not a human in sight. *I'm safe. I'm safe for now.*

He slumps against a tree, sighing quietly as his shirt rides up in the back.

Fucking hell.

When George wakes up, his blankets are in a heap on the floor. *When did I manage to fall asleep?*

Upon sitting up he notices he fell asleep on the couch. The bunched up quilt that remained on the seat still smelled of the vampire.

He throws it on the ground and swings his legs over the side of the sofa, rising to his feet. He twists to crack his aching back. *How did Dream never complain about sleeping here? This sofa is a nightmare.*

He wanders into his bedroom to wash up, passing his unmade bed and dirtied floor. Dirty dishes litter his bedside table, but he can't bring himself to clean like he usually would.

He puts on the first clothes he can find, which probably aren't even clean, throwing a coat over his shoulders to protect himself from the cold. *Maybe a walk will make me feel better. I could go to Sapnap's. I'm sure he'll be happy to see me, as per usual.*

Looking out his window, he takes a moment to observe the dim sunlight that peeks through the clouds. It filters through the tree leaves, dotting his house in specs of sun. In all honesty, it's a nice day outside, even if it doesn't match his mood. He closes the blinds.

He walks to his front door, slipping on his main pair of boots that definitely need to be replaced. *Sapnap can at least get me distracted. Maybe I'll manage to forget about all of this for a few minutes, if I'm lucky.*

He grips the doorknob in his hand, and just as he's about to open it, he glances back at the weapons spilling out of his closet.

He furrows his brows in thought, then relaxes. *I'll be fine. Sapnap's place isn't far.*

With that, he leaves his house.

The walk is long, but it doesn't feel that way. He's done it a thousand times over, he knows it as he cuts through the park on the familiar path. He passes a familiar brick wall, but doesn't allow himself to get distracted.

When he's passing through the town center, he notices a group crowded around the town fountain. His mind flashes with sweet memories of a certain masquerade ball.

"Sweet isn't the word I'd use."

"Maybe. But I think it suits you."

Not now.

Shaking his head slightly, he tunes back into reality, the warm feeling fading away.

He approaches the fountain. With each step he takes, he has a worse and worse feeling about what he might find. When he reaches the front of the crowd after some pushing through, he lets out a small gasp.

Shattered pieces of stone and brick litter the ground, people staring wearily when they pass the destroyed fountain. There's a small crowd of people who form, coming and going to study the damage. It's a disturbing sight.

The water leaks out of the pool at the bottom, sinking into the street drains. The stone is cracked and angrily scratched, large chunks of stone all over the street and some still breaking off under the weight of itself.

Only a vampire could be capable of this. George thinks, swallowing. *But it's never happened before. What would a vampire be doing destroying the town fountain?*

His mind swirls with questions as he nervously fiddles with the stray threads on his vest. *Maybe Dream did this. Dream probably did this, he's strong and surely upset enough to.*

A shudder rushes down his spine. *What if this is meant to be a sign? A message, maybe. Maybe he's threatening me.*

A piece of stone breaks off the middle layer, crashing into the leaking pool of water.

I hope I'm never in the state of this fountain. George thinks. Fear wracks his body, raising goosebumps along his pale skin. He sees people giving him questioning glances, presumably because he's been fixated on the destroyed fountain for so long, face draining of color. They've already moved on, going about their days and wandering away.

He closes his eyes to imagine the sight for a moment, seeing Dream destroy the fountain. It makes him shudder.

He feels panic swell in his chest, stepping away. *I have to find Sapnap. He'll understand.*

After over a mile on foot, George made it to Sapnap's house. His chest rises and falls like the swaying trees, taking in deep heaving breaths to try and prevent himself from panicking.

Should I be doing this? I don't want to worry him.

He finds himself without an answer as he knocks weakly on the door, stepping back to let it swing open. He always tells Sapnap to get a door that doesn't open outwards to hit people in the face, but he never bothered to change the door.

He's shaken out of his drifting thoughts when the door swings open, barely missing him. "George! How are you, man?"

The moment George makes eye contact with Sapnap, his heart drops. *What am I doing? This is actually pathetic.*

George can only manage to get a word out before he has to stop, fearing the more he speaks the closer he draws to tears. His throat feels raw, tired of the repetitive tears. *Not now.*

"Sap-" He starts, eyes watering.

"What's wrong?" His face falls, putting an arm around George and pulling him into the house. He closes the door gently, "Is everything okay?"

"No." George hugs Sapnap and buries his face into the taller's shoulder. He's not one for hugs and physical affection, only furthering Sapnap's perpetual concern for George's well being. He immediately reciprocates the hug.

"Are you hurt?" He asks.

"No." George snuffles.

"... Does this have to do with Dream?"

He goes quiet for a moment, taking deep breaths. Sapnap smells like pinewood and vanilla, he notices. *I don't deserve him.*

“Dream’s an asshole.” George says, finally.

Sapnap swallows. “What’s going on?”

George thinks for a moment. What is he supposed to say? What excuse can he use? What would Sapnap believe for him to be this upset? He wants someone to be there for him, but he doesn’t want Sapnap to actually do anything for him. It’s not his fault.

His fingers dig into Sapnap’s shirt.

George just kind of wants to be held right now.

Sapnap sighs, and hesitantly rubs a hand up and down George’s back. “O-Okay, you don’t have to tell me. It’s okay, man. Let me get you some tea.”

Sapnap sits George on the couch with a quilt draped over him, and walks into the kitchen to make two cups of tea, heating the water on the stove. From the smell, George can tell it’s Chai tea. He mentioned it being his favorite once maybe a couple years ago. For being such a snarky asshole most of the time, the fact that Sapnap remembered something so small puts out a bit of the raging fire of his emotions. At least someone still cares about him.

The noiret returns a few minutes later with two mugs, handing one to the brunet and taking a seat beside him. When George takes a sip he notes the hint of honey, just the way he likes it. He manages a ghost of a smile.

“Thank you, Sapnap.”

“Sure.”

Silence hangs in the air, clouding around George and swirling like an oncoming tornado. It was probably stupid to just barge into Sapnap’s home like this, all upset and a mess, and for all Sapnap knows it’s just because of relationship problems. Which, it was, but it also had to do with the past few weeks that were apparently life and death situations. But he wouldn’t tell him that, of course. George didn’t want to talk anymore, the fight with Dream yesterday took all of the anger out of his breath.

Now that he’s sitting here in the comfort of Sapnap’s home, next to him, being listened to, it

makes a tiny flower bloom in his heart. The only time he'd ever showed his emotions like this was a couple months after he moved into the town and met Sapnap, when he was caught in the middle of a panic attack over his family after they'd sent him a letter, one that finalized that George was no longer considered family.

George would never have let someone in to help, even if his life had depended on it, which is why he's so glad Sapnap was the one to come inside and listen. He remembered shoving the noisier away over and over through his tears, assuring that he was fine. But Sapnap was a really stubborn guy.

They grew closer after that, allowing George to feel more open to Sapnap about his emotions. He almost wants to smile at the memory.

George looks discretely over at his friend, who was waiting patiently for him to calm down. He decides he should probably explain himself a bit.

He takes a deep breath, forcing his jumbled brain to clear. "I just can't believe I fell for another dickhead." Is what he says in place of all the complex feelings.

"Everyone makes mistakes, don't beat yourself up about it.." Sapnap says.

"But I don't make mistakes like that anymore. I wasn't supposed to." George rubs his eyes, sinking back into the couch and the quilt coming up to his chin. "I thought I knew better by now. Nobody could ever love me like that." George mumbles, that part actually being an admission of truth.

"If he did something to make you feel like this, he couldn't have been worth it, right?"

George blinks, then slowly responds. "I don't know. He made me feel something, Sapnap. I just want that feeling back."

Sapnap tilts his head to the side. "So, you want him back?"

George stares. *Reconciliation? Could that even happen after what I just found out?*

Briefly, he considers it. But telling from their harsh goodbye and the... *circumstances*, he guesses that even if he were to be willing, Dream certainly wouldn't. Not after George literally *shot* him.

George replies. "I don't think that's gonna happen, if I'm honest."

His friend's dark eyes swell in empathy, and the sight makes George feel both comforted and also sick beyond belief. George hates when people worry about him, but honestly, he didn't know what else to do. He had gotten so used to Dream's previously soothing, secure presence that he forgot how to live without it.

"I'm sorry." Sapnap says sincerely, placing a hesitant hand on George's shoulder over the quilt, probably in knowing of George's usually uncomfortable reaction to physical touch of any kind. This time, though, it was genuinely nice. "I know you really liked him. You are kind of shit at showing affection, but I could see it in the way you looked at him." Sapnap chuckles lightly, then frowning at George's dropped gaze.

George's body curls in on itself more, as if to protect itself from being any more hurt. It was sad, because yes, George *really* liked Dream. Dream had given him everything he'd basically ever wanted. Security, friendship, trust, compassion. A touch of domesticity.

But all of it was fake, now.

George was used.

That's what vampires do. They use people.

George was never anything but a blood bag to Dream. One he could mess with, one he could trick, one he could push around for his own amusement.

None of that could have been real, right? Vampires don't need emotions. Dream has had every reason to kill me.

Maybe some of it was real. George thinks hopefully, but almost immediately pushing it aside. *But I know if that was true, he wouldn't have tried to fight me.*

Doesn't matter now, anyways. If he did care at all, he certainly wouldn't now.

George's chest burns with heartache to a painful degree. Tears had started falling again at some point during his train of thought. Sapnap had also shifted to be closer to him, putting an arm around his hunched shoulders. George noted to himself to thank Sapnap later, unable to focus enough or steady his voice to speak at the moment.

The thought pokes him again. *Maybe Dream did mean some of it. Even just a little.*

After spending so long around me, he had to care at least a little bit, right?

George swallows hard. *If that's the case, I just threw away my only chance for something with him at all.*

Finally returning to the present, somewhat, George mutters out in a low breath, "Sap?"

"Yeah?" The answer is immediate, undemanding. Sapnap was kind of *too* good at being a best friend. George's heart swells with guilt.

"Do you think..." George starts, having to clear his throat again before he can be cut off by more sobs, but it doesn't prevent the fat tears rolling down his cheeks. "Do you think that...he ever cared?"

The noriet leans forward to make eye contact, eyes full of empathy. "I...I don't know him like I know you. But..." Sapnap looks down, then back up. "Honestly, Dream looked at you like you were the only person in the world. I don't know what he did, or why, but...I dunno, man." Sapnap seems to be treading carefully with his words, watching George's expression. He continues, "I think he cared about you a lot. Like, a shit ton."

It makes George want to cry all over again, but he resists, knowing it'll only make Sapnap think he said something wrong. Instead, he leans against the taller and sighs heavily, tightening his lips into a flat line. Sapnap rubs a hand along his back. George is hesitant, but welcomes the feeling.

Yeah. Yeah he did look at me like that, didn't he? George mourns. *I bet I looked at him like that, too. I must have. Isn't that funny?*

His hands clench hard onto the couch cushion. *And now, I'll never get to see him look at me like that again. Or at all.*

George had been craving that kind of affection for so long, once Dream came along he forgot how hard it was to live without. Sapnap could offer his own kind of affection but it wasn't the same. It couldn't be. The void begins to hollow him out once more as it did before Dream showed up.

He wonders if there ever would be someone that would smile at him like that again, that would have such a bad sense of humor, yet still somehow make him laugh. Someone who would remember his favorite color, someone who fit together like a puzzle piece with him when they hugged, someone who would look at him like he was the universe and more, not realizing that George felt the exact same way about them.

Everything I've been missing.

It was him.

His breath stops. *I need to see him again. If I don't, he'll be gone for good.*

I have to go.

"Thank you." He murmurs. He lifts his head off Sapnap's chest to look at him.

"Of course, George. I hate to see you like this, and I'll do anything I can to help." Sapnap replies, offering a small smile.

Even though George knows Sapnap can't know everything going on inside his head and in his life, he's grateful for his kindness. *Maybe I'll explain everything to him eventually.*

The moment George is out the door, he breaks into a sprint towards the woods.

I'll find you again, Dream.

Chapter End Notes

sapnap comfort scenes..... i love him sm

Rabbit Field

Chapter Summary

this one is fun

Warnings for chapter 11: extreme violence, blood, character death, swearing, crying

enjoy :D

The forest is quiet, dark. Going this deep into the forest was always out of the question for George, but considering death is a likely option no matter what he does, it doesn't seem to be a priority right now to worry about it. Townspeople would speak of how in the heart of the woods, the trees are so dense that not a single beam of sunlight can make it to the forest floor.

It's pretty accurate.

The low orchestra of crickets and frogs ringing through his ears and into his head. He ignores the crunch of leaves beneath him, attempting to focus on any distant voices he could hear in the woods.

"Dream?"

George turns to face the trees, now realizing he can't see the light from the town anymore. Just darkness, shrubbery, short grass and fungi. Dream's still nowhere in sight, he wants to cry from the frustration. It must have been *hours* now, that he just kept wandering around aimlessly in hopes that the vampire would pick up his scent. "Dream!"

A twig snaps.

He spins around towards the sound, but before he can process anything he's forcefully pinned to the tree behind him by a taller figure. Their hand clamps over his mouth. He yelps out in surprise, warranting a harsh "shut up".

He opens his eyes, and from what he can tell the man has light pink hair and a sinister smile, one that shows off his sharp teeth. He looks familiar.

George's heart drops.

"What're you doing out here, human?" He says lowly. His voice is unusually lower than anyone George has heard before. "It's awfully dangerous in these parts."

He tries to scream, but the hand over his mouth prevents any sound from escaping. His chest begins to rise and fall rapidly, the panic building in his chest. His throat feels raw. All he can manage is a frantic but muffled whine.

He struggles against the vampire's grip, clawing at his arms, but to no avail. To his horror, the man in question begins to lean into his neck, his ponytail tickling George's nape.

"I'm surprised you've gotten this far into the woods, you've made yourself an easy target." The vampire parts his lips, one hand trailing to George's healing shoulder, brushing over the bandages Dream had applied. "Gonna finish what I started with you. I see you've patched up my marks. You and all your fancy equipment."

George can feel the taller's breath sweep across his skin. He turns away, shaking. *Should've brought some gear. This is what I get.*

I hope Dream will at least find my body. Maybe I'll at least be of some worth as a blood bag.

He closes his eyes and prepares for the sharp pain in his neck.

This is it. This is how he dies.

To some stupid vampire. Just like he always knew he would.

It was stupid to think I could just find Dream like this.

"TECHNO!"

A different voice.

George opens his eyes.

There was a sudden flash of movement, and the monster was no longer on him. George takes the deepest breath he'd ever had into his lungs, realizing he had been holding it for a while.

After a moment of regathering his thoughts and realizing he was in fact, still alive, he looks to see the source of his safety.

His jaw drops.

Another vampire of similar stature to the attacker (who's name was apparently Techno), tackles and claws at him, terrifyingly sharp fangs bared with no remorse, clothes tattered and torn, dirty blonde waves clinging to his forehead with an unhinged ferocity in his expression. His tan skin and lightly toned arms catching the harsh night shadows, pushing and pulling with the other vampire with an inhuman fearlessness.

George can hardly recognize him, but there's no mistaking who it is.

Dream shoves the other vampire into the tree harshly, so hard that George hears a crack from the tree trunk. Techno hisses, and kicks Dream in the stomach, causing him to stagger backwards.

"What the hell is WRONG with you?!" The pink-haired roars. "This one's mine, get your own, jackass!"

Dream doesn't grace him with a verbal response, and instead charges forwards again.

George is frozen in place as he stares.

He watches as Dream thrashes against Techno's grip, he watches as Dream throws the other monster to the ground, as he dug his nails into the soil, as he slashes skin open with his teeth, leaving remnants of red liquid in the earth and on tree bark.

After a neck-and-neck fight for dominance, Dream gets the upper hand when pinning Techno to the ground under his roughed-up boot.

“I’m giving you,” Dream snarls. “One chance to leave.”

The other looks up at him, and just laughs hoarsely. “What, you want some for yourself, Dreamie boy? Is that what this is?”

Dream presses his foot into his chest. Even from a distance, George could see the fury in his eyes. “You’re not-” He’s cut off by a violent scrape to his ankle, forcing him out of his advantageous position. Techno takes the opportunity to come sprinting full force back to George.

“Shit, shit-” George shuffles backwards, and attempts to frantically cover his face in his arms. His defense proves unnecessary when no pain comes once again, the frustrated groan of Techno following a loud thump, probably Dream colliding with his body again and throwing him to the ground.

Dream throws Techno to the ground with a terrifying surge of energy, a slight imprint left in the dirt where the vampire’s body collided. The two vampires fight like feral animals; holding back no thrashes, mauls or slashes. George can’t help but watch Dream.

His eyes are pinpointed, pupils constricted like a hunter on prey. With each slash, he gets less controlled, more animalistic, raw, unfiltered. George realizes something.

He doesn’t know Dream.

He never knew Dream at all.

Dream is a vampire. A very, very strong vampire that could kill a mortal with the flick of his finger.

Dream pins the vampire to the ground in a choke-hold.

“Come on, Dream.” Techno coughs out under his grasp, a sick grin remaining on his face. “You know how it is. You must know how starved we’ve all been recently, so let’s share.”

George’s face pales, and he sinks into the tree trunk behind him. *Please don’t take that offer. Please don’t take that offer.*

Dream presses his thumbs harder into Techno’s throat, causing him to wince. “George is *mine* .” He growls, possessiveness and aggression twisting between the words.

Techno raises a brow as he squints up at Dream. “Oh, so you know this human? That’s-” He takes in a strained inhale, lips growing into a sneer. “That’s pathetic.”

Techno jabs his knee harshly into Dream’s stomach and gives him a chance to breathe in, and take advantage of Dream’s loss of grip to slash into his side with his sharp nails. Dream grunts in pain, and just barely manages to stand before locking hands with Techno’s to push against him. George grimaces at the bloody tear in his side.

“We’re both vampires, Dream. Don’t fool yourself.”

Dream’s feet scrape in the dirt as he’s pushed backwards. “Unlike you, I can control my instincts.”

“Do you really believe that?” Techno huffs. “Why are you protecting this mortal, anyways? Are you still hanging onto that ‘*can’t kill a human*’ shit?”

Can’t kill a human? What does he mean?

“It’s not that.” Dream growls. He pushes back harder and gains some ground. “Maybe it was before, but not anymore.”

“Oh, what is it now, then? Are you acting like a fool now to make your little human happy?”

Little human. That’s all I am to him.

Dream snarls viciously and throws him back and to the ground, Techno uses an arm to block his face, which Dream grabs and sinks his nails into.

Techno bares his teeth in a twisted smile. “At least I have the makings of a real vampire. You never did. And you never will.”

And then, Dream bares his teeth, and sinks them straight into Techno’s neck.

George tries to look away, but he doesn’t. He can’t.

So he watches.

Techno's body thrashes for a couple moments, then stops moving. The longer Dream's fangs remain in his neck, the more the blond's wounds lessen and look as if there was nothing there in the first place. He pulls away, tearing the flesh from the other's neck and turns to spit. And now, torn and bloodied clothes hang from him with no injuries. He's healed. Completely.

Dream pulls back further, and looks down at the body.

The air stills.

After a while of George simply staring at Dream, who's fixed in a predatory daze at the corpse on the ground, he gathers the courage to break the silence.

"Dream..?"

Dream's head snaps up instantly in his direction, pupils dilating, mouth smeared with blood. His fangs had grown since he saw them the first time. George gasps quietly, swallowing his spit.

Dream really didn't look human right now.

Dream stands. He begins walking towards George.

He's gonna kill me. He's gonna kill me. This was a mistake and I'm definitely going to die. I trusted him with my life and now I'm going to die.

Dream approaches, and stops right in front of him. George is shaking.

"P-...Please-" George whispers.

Dream steps forwards. His expression is blank, similar to one of a ravenous wolf.

George steps back.

Am I about to die?

Dream takes another step. Then another.

George takes multiple back. When Dream doesn't stop advancing, George's breath quickens, finding that he can't back up fast enough to stay away, and then-

Dream grabs George by the shoulders and yanks him into his arms.

George resists the urge to yell at the top of his lungs. His hands tremble, his body is paralyzed. He wants to push Dream away out of panic, but he lacks the energy to. He gives in.

The thumping of Dream's heart is beating so feverishly fast against George's chest. He can feel fingers twitch against his back, and grip onto his shirt. He's fuming, George can hear each shaky breath taken in from behind him, and lightly grazing his neck.

He's going to bite me.

Dream doesn't say anything. His embrace doesn't feel warm or safe, not anymore. Eventually the tension in his arms slips away and he pulls George in a little closer. He exhales.

George feels a tear fall from his chin.

"Mine." Dream eventually whispers. Even now, George could hear a deep rumble behind his voice.

Mine. The memory of warm sheets, a quiet morning and long, freckled arms return to him.

Everything collapses in. *Too much. It's too much. There's so much wrong that can't be fixed.*

But now, he just wants some peace.

He melts into Dream's arms, and cries.

He allows the tears to pour out, a lifetime's worth of restrained baggage all spilling over the edge of walls he'd worked his whole life to build up. It was all too much, *everything* was too much, the fear, the effort he put into ignoring how much he missed Dream's presence, how much he missed how when Dream hugs him, he's fully enveloped in a perfect safeness that he's never found anywhere else. George lets himself, *finally*, fall into it all.

He goes limp in Dream's unmoving arms, though his fingers clench the back of his bloodied shirt and he's surprised he hadn't made rips of his own in it. He presses his face gently into Dream's neck, and lets his wet eyelashes shut tight and press into the tanned skin. And Dream pulls him closer, their chests touching, two broken souls clenching onto each other for dear life, because right now, all they have is each other. They had a lot of problems, so, *so* many problems to deal with. And George was definitely in the worst state he'd ever been in his whole life.

But now, he just doesn't care. Dream had seen so much of him already, there was no reason he shouldn't just pour it all out for him to see. If George was going to regret it, he'd worry about that later.

Because right now, the only thing that matters is the pair of arms keeping him from collapsing to the dirt.

An indeterminable amount of minutes go by like that, the unfiltered desperation in their grip on each other being the only thing George can focus on. Dream's grip was tight, almost borderline painful, but not awful. Honestly, George had missed his hold too much to care. No matter what happened next. If it was death? Then whatever. He deserved it for doing this. At least he got to hold Dream one last time.

George's breath hitches when he feels two sharp objects graze his neck, just barely, before feeling a shudder on his skin and they pull away. And finally, Dream speaks.

"*Fuck*, sorry." Dream says, more as a growl than comprehensible words. "Still adjusting."

George's expression softens, and he lets out a breath of relief. *So , he's not going to bite me.*

He doesn't want to kill me. Not now, at least. We've got that going for us.

He opens his mouth to speak, but closes it again after feeling how strained his throat feels from the overwhelming fear that had surged through him. So instead, he holds Dream tighter, burying his nose into his neck and feeling his pulse rate quicken. Dream exhales, slowing his breathing with great difficulty.

So he did care. He's actually not like the other vampires.

Dream actually cared about me. Still cares about me.

I'm sorry.

George sniffles against Dream's skin, allowing the arms to be comforting and safe for the first time since...well, what felt like way too long. In reality, it has just been a little over a day, but time goes by slowly when every second is downright miserable.

After they both calm down enough, Dream finally pulls back enough to look George in the eyes, faces mere inches away.

"Are you..." Dream whispers, voice still slightly cracking with instability. "...okay?" His pupils had more or less turned back to normal, full and sincere, something George was hesitant to accept as being real. But seeing as there was no reason for Dream to lie right now, George finds the corners of his lips twitching upwards.

"Y-Yeah...yeah, I am." George says back quietly. *This is so weird. George thinks. I'm really just talking to a vampire. And not fighting them. This doesn't feel right.*

Dream's expression remains stagnant, but George swears he sees the hint of a smile in his eyes. "Okay." He replies. He suddenly pulls back, all the comforting warmth seceding and leaving George to be consumed by the cold, lonely wind once again. The blond slowly steps back more, and turns around.

"Wait, where are you going?" George asks urgently.

The vampire looks back, a look of hurt evident in his furrowed brows. "Leaving." He answers solemnly, and turns back around to look into the deeper part of the forest. "I'm sorry I ruined your life. I want you to have it back, George."

George strides forward, and takes Dream's wrist in his hand. The tall man turns to face him in surprise. George feels embarrassed at how desperate he must look, clinging onto Dream like his life depends on it. *I don't care anymore. My dignity is long gone, anyways.*

So he pleads. "Don't go." Green and brown stare into each other, trying to figure out what the other was thinking. The intensity of Dream's gaze could make George buckle at the knees. "Please."

Dream's face softens. "But...everything I did-"

"I don't care right now." George begs, tightening his grip on Dream's arm. "Just- don't... Don't leave. I can't do it. I need it."

Dream's eyes bore down at him for a long moment, before finally sighing and turning to face him. "If...If that's what you really want."

George pleads with his eyes. "I do. I..I came looking for you." George says, gently letting go of Dream's wrist.

"You did?" Dream genuinely questions.

"Yeah."

They stare at each other for a long, tense moment. Dream's expression is painted with mistrust and confusion.

"But... why?" Dream mutters. "Why would you do that?"

George opens his mouth to speak, but then closes it. He tries to speak again, but stops himself once more.

Because I love you? Is that what this is? Or am I seriously just this lonely that I'll chase down a literal bloodthirsty creature for some kind of personal connection?

Do I want to be friends? Maybe, but is that even possible? A human and a vampire, actually having a genuine friendship? We were friends before this, and he was a vampire then, too. Was coming here pointless? Where do we even go from here? Where can we go?

George blinks at the face staring back at him. *I don't care.* He realizes. *I don't care what we are. But I need someone like you in my life.*

I think you might give my life purpose.

"I don't...know." He settles for.

Dream looks thoughtfully at him, then says "You didn't come to shoot me again, did you?"

"No!" George urgently says, hands raising in defense. Dream laughs lightly at the response. If George is being honest, he looks like a complete maniac with all of the blood on his mouth and coating his teeth.

It's nice to make him laugh again, though.

"I'm sor-"

"No, it's okay." Dream grins, waving his hands. "I'm just pulling your leg. Too soon, though... Hah, sorry."

A beat passes.

"Thank you..." George starts, speaking uncertainly.

"For what?" Dream asks, hands in his pockets.

"For saving me. From..." He falters.

"Oh, right. Of course, yeah."

George finally looks up to make eye contact with him again.

I don't really need to care about what we are. I just care that we get to be something at all. And I know you care.

I came here to talk to you, so what do I say? I don't even know what you want to hear.

“And,” George begins again, voice wavering slightly. Dream quirks a brow.

“I’m.. Sorry. I’m so sorry for shooting you. Not listening to you. And, I’m.. Sorry for this mess.” George says. He has so much more he wants to say, but Dream speaks first.

“You’re... apologizing?” Dream questions cautiously, quirking his head to the side in confusion. “I...I tried to...to *kill* you.” He winces at the word. “You should hate me. I’m...I’m unstable. It’s not safe for you to be around me so much.”

George’s small hand hesitantly comes to rest on Dream’s chest, moving slow as if it could break something. But his touch is soft. Safe. He hopes Dream feels it.

“I don’t hate you, Dream.”

Lowly, tame, but threatening. “But I can hurt you. I wouldn’t know if I did.”

George leans closer, standing on the tip of his toes. He feels Dream’s slow breathing against his lips. Recklessness and audacious needs fill him, and soon spill out on his tongue. “Then hurt me.”

It almost feels like a challenge, and that’s part of why he says it. Dream is stubborn. Dream is competitive. Dream doesn’t back down.

The forest feels painfully quiet, the tense, teasing demand hanging between their lips, mere centimeters away from being fulfilled. Dream stares wide eyed down at him, his Adam’s apple visibly shifting. Large, gentle hands meet George’s jawline, tilting his head even closer. George can hear the low rumble behind Dream’s every breath as he parts his lips, and their lips brush just *barely*, a feather’s touch. Suddenly, Dream’s pupils shrink, and his teeth are bared, and George breath stops at the feeling of the fangs brushing his lips. The grip on his jaw turns from tender to harsh.

“Dream?” George mutters.

With no response, he tries again. More urgent this time. “Dream?”

Dream blinks, and suddenly George is roughly shoved back by his shoulders to the ground.

George inhales deeply, taking back the breath he had lost for a few moments. Dream stands in shock, hands frozen where they last were touching George. The panic in his mind is evident in every way, in his shaking chest and wild eyes. He digs his hands through his hair, pulling at it in distress.

“George, what the fuck? What’s *wrong* with you?!” He practically roars. “Did you see what I just did to that vampire? What were you *thinking*?!”

“I...” George exhales. “I-I’m sorry! I didn’t think that-”

“That what? You can’t just- I’m a *vampire*! You can’t just kiss me, I could fucking *kill you*!” His hands express his words dramatically, the unsteadiness rolling off of him in waves.

“I...” George flushes darker at the word. *Kiss. That’s what we almost just did. I almost just kissed a vampire.*

I almost just kissed Dream. Holy shit.

It clicks in his brain. *Is that why he pulled away on the roof?*

“I didn’t know that... it was like that.”

Dream sighs loudly, and he plops to the ground in exhaustion, his head in his hands. “I can’t do this. This is awful. You’re gonna get hurt.”

Shaky but confident, George steps over to sit about two feet away from Dream. Being closer to him probably wouldn’t be the best right now. “Please don’t say that... I came out here looking for you and I’m sure as hell not leaving without you after all of that.”

Dream pulls his head up, eyebags visible and hair a mess. His voice comes gentler this time. “I don’t know what you want, but I can’t help you.”

George cringes at his own cheesy thought. *But you're what I want.*

"I mean... you stayed in my house for a few days without anything happening, right?"

Dream looks at a fallen leaf. "I was tempted every day, though."

"But you didn't give in." George points out. "Why?" He asks for himself and for Dream.

"Because..." Dream starts. He seems to think about the answer a lot before finishing. "Because I couldn't do it to you. You...you're just too *sweet*. And-" He sharply cuts himself off.

"And what?" George asks, intrigued.

Dream buries his mouth and nose in his knees. "Nothing."

"No, no come on," George pushes. "It's important."

Dream sighs, before pitifully smiling and looking at the ground to avoid eye contact. "And you're so... *beautiful*."

George's face is on fire, red rushing to his face and blooming in his cheeks. Maybe Dream's words would be a little more charming if he wasn't covered in vampire blood, but hearing him say the words at all was absolutely damning. *It wasn't fake flirting. It never was. He actually thinks those things about me.*

"You try for me." George says, blunt.

"Of course I do." Dream averts his gaze, head resting on his knees.

"Do you really care about me that much? That you've been starving yourself, just to keep me safe?"

“How could I not? You gave me chance after chance to be better. I...” Dream drops his head between his shoulders. “I didn’t expect you to be forgiving...”

George furrows his brows. “Why wouldn’t I be? You hadn’t done anything to me when we met.”

Dream mumbles something, but George doesn’t hear it.

“What?”

“Nobody’s ever done that for me.” Dream admits. The words are timid, and George can practically feel how Dream regrets saying it out loud.

“You’re kidding.”

Dream snaps his head up to look at him. “You don’t need to rub it in.”

“No! No, like...” George hurriedly explains. “You’ve really never had someone to talk to you like this? Ever?”

“Didn’t have much of a choice after I turned.” Dream says, resting his head again. “Vampires don’t *do* talking.”

George quiets, shoulders drooping. *At least I have Sapnap. I can’t imagine not having someone like that now.* He looks to Dream sympathetically. “Well, good thing I’m not a vampire, right?”

Dream chuckles humorlessly. “Yeah. Good thing.”

The sun has since dipped below the horizon, taking the day with it. The clouds swirl in the darkening sky, stars emerging in the night. George stands and brushes off his pants. “It’s getting late.”

“I can walk you home.”

“Okay.” George smiles.

Dream stands, combing a hand through his dirty hair. His fingers are still caked with drying blood, staining his clothes. George looks away.

They start the trek home, avoiding Techno’s body on a familiar path through the woods. The light is swallowed by the trees, leaving the forest almost completely pitch black on their way home. It would be relaxing if it weren’t for the prospect of a vampire jumping out to kill him at any given moment.

He knew Dream would be there, though.

When they finally make it to the front of Geore’s house beneath a familiar street lamp, George sighs heavily. “Thank you.”

“I should be thanking you.” Dream says. “You’ve helped me a lot tonight.”

“You’ve helped *me* a lot. You saved my life.”

Dream peers down at him, shoving his unoccupied hands into his pockets, unsure of what else to do with them. “Yeah, um...please don’t do stupid things like that anymore.”

“Alright, alright.” George says, half ashamed and half adoring in his tone. “I won’t.”

“Promise?”

“I promise.”

Dream waits for George to take a move to go inside, but he doesn’t. Dream doesn’t move either.

“Can I hug you, George?” Dream asks, suddenly. He’s breathless, looking at George with yearning eyes. George says nothing, instead holds his arms out for an embrace.

It feels familiar.

Dream captures him in a tight hug, one that demonstrates just how perfectly they fit together. George sighs into Dream's chest, closing his eyes and taking in his scent. Dream buries his head in George's hair, sandy blonde hair falling over George's brown. George presses his nose into Dream's neck.

Even though they'd hugged just earlier this feels different. It's secure. It's hope.

A chill runs down his spine from the sudden gust of cold wind, cutting through the forest leaves.

"Should probably go inside." George decides, pulling away just a few inches.

"Ah, okay." Dream lets go, letting his arm trail down to George's hand. "I'll talk to you later, promise."

"What? Dream, please," George looks up to reach the eyes of the taller. His face is illuminated by the dim street lamp. "Come with me. I can- you don't have to...." He trails off, eyes filled with destitute hope.

"George, I don't think that's a good idea." Dream intertwines their hands bittersweetly.

"But I don't want you to-"

"I'll be okay, I just want to give us both a little time. You've been through enough. I don't know if it'd be...um... *safe* for me to stay with you right now. I'll see you tomorrow. Is that okay?"

Stay safe, please. I don't want you hurting anymore.

"Okay..." George squeezes his hand gently. "Talk to you tomorrow."

"Get some sleep." Dream says.

There's a yearning in George's heart. He wants to explain those butterflies, his admiration and care for Dream, worrying about his safety and held captive by his stupid charm. He sees it, now, he's protected and helped George time and time again. Even if it wasn't like that before, he could see it in his eyes. The concern, the care, that's *real*. He wonders, does Dream see right through him, too? Does he see how desperately he needs this, needs direction, needs Dream to be in his life. He

wants to say it aloud, but the timing just isn't right. It's simple, on the tip of his tongue. But instead, he smiles and pulls away, walking to his front door.

Just as he turns the knob, "George..?"

He turns immediately, eyes meeting a vulnerable Dream, who stands at the edge of his sidewalk as if they're millions of miles away from each other already.

"Yes, Dream?" He asks, curious.

"Just..." He starts, fidgeting with his hands mindlessly. "I'll... We'll make this right. It'll be okay, I think."

The words sound like more of a personal reassurance rather than for George, which makes it all the more important that he hears it. Hearing the smallness of Dream's voice when saying it makes him regret every moment he had ever hurt Dream even more.

"I know." George smiles gently. "Just... Gonna take some time."

"Yeah... yeah." Dream sighs, dropping his hands.

"Goodnight Dream."

"Night."

George steps into his dimly lit home and shuts the door with a soft click. It's as if a huge, crushing weight had been lifted off his chest. He turns off the lights in the kitchen and living room mindlessly as he wanders into his bedroom.

Settling into bed tonight, George finds himself feeling more at peace than he has in a long time. The air feels fresh, his window opened *just* enough to let the night breeze into his bedroom. His heart beats steadily, a feeling he wanted to get used to once again.

We'll make this right.

He dreams of Dream in a field of rabbits.

Heart on His Sleeve

Chapter Summary

hi! thank you for being patient :) it was a busy week. I'm just gonna take this opportunity to remind you that this is a collab fic! i cant take all the credit :sob: please go show my bestie some love over on wattpad and Instagram! her handle is @VanilluvCoffee <3

Warnings for chapter 12: weaponry, language, implied form of self harm

enjoy :D

Soft, white bedding, cool air, yellow light beams and singing birds welcome George as he wakes.

For the first time in what must've been years, his morning isn't fret with things to do, anxieties that could never really be resolved, or frantic half-asleep movements to grab his weapons and get out the door, as if sleep was a burden. This time, it's just... quiet. And dare he say...

Happy.

George doesn't even know the last time he could think about using that word. Not for himself, anyways.

The blur of events yesterday all muddled into one, and it hardly feels like he'd lived through any of that at all. It might take a while to fully process everything.

And honestly, he doesn't really feel like trying to process it right now. So he doesn't make an effort to. His chilled pillowcase is much more interesting anyways.

He lays there for however long, minutes, maybe an hour. It felt so good to just stop doing everything. The sweet feeling of Dream's arms around him still lingered on his skin where they'd touched, and if he tried hard enough, he could pretend that he was here. Holding him like he did before, and George could know for a fact, that it was because he *wanted* to.

The feeling dissipates as he sits up, mindlessly stretching his sore arms and legs. Judging from its position in the sky, it's a late morning, but still not as bad as it was before yesterday.

He brushes and changes into a fresh vest and coat, in an attempt to pull himself together. *I need to clean this house.*

He finds himself wondering when Dream would stop by his house, as he's making breakfast. *Or would Dream not be able to, since it was day out?*

George blinks down at the sizzling pan. *I was really oblivious, wasn't I? He only ever came by at night, how the hell did I not put the pieces together?*

The toast sizzles. *Maybe it's because I didn't want to even consider the possibility.*

Plating the toast, he sits by the window and looks out into the morning sun, swaying trees looming over his house in the distance.

It's a quiet, nice day. Especially for a day right after experiencing something that most people would consider traumatic. Fortunately, or maybe unfortunately, death was nothing new to George. It was a chosen job.

Is that bad? George wonders, taking another bite out of the crispy bread, chewing thoughtfully. *Is it bad that I feel more scared of what Dream could do to me than watching that other vampire be killed in front of my eyes? Is it bad that I'm more scared of how this is going to affect Dream, and not me?*

Dream must have seen worse all the time, right? He's a vampire... he's used to killing things.

George's heart skips in realization. *Just like me.*

When George refocuses into the present, his plate is empty. The room feels quieter.

The thought circles him like a predator. *Am I just as bad as them?*

Standing abruptly, he sets his plate into the sink, letting it clink against the metal with the sloppy

way he discards it.

No. It's different.

He pauses in his hallway, and looks down at the couch, still muddled with random comforters and quilts. Memories of tears, recollection of sweet mornings with a double meaning. George tenses his hands into fists. *It's different.*

George flinches at the sudden sound of a knock at his door. And, of course, his mind jumps to one thought. *Dream?*

But of course, it's the middle of the day. Finding a way to travel in the sun like this would be miserable, borderline impossible. It's probably the mail. Or Sapnap. *God, Sapnap.* George winces. *There's gonna be a lot to explain to him.*

So after calming his nerves and not bothering to check his appearance, he opens the door.

But, of course, life just wants to give him all sorts of surprises today.

"Hi." Dream says, smiling apologetically. He's holding a giant wooden board at his side, one that's nearly as tall as he is. All of the blood that was on him last night was now gone, his hair clean and light looking, looking more full than normal, but also more of a mess than normal because of the fluffiness. Dressed in a black, wrinkled, button-up dress shirt and jeans with what appears to be the same boots he wore often.

"Dream," George replies, voice sounding embarrassingly small. He clears his throat. "Wh- How did-? What are you doing?! What is that *thing* ? And why-?"

Dream chuckles, glancing at the wooden board then back to George. "I made it. It's how I got here." He holds the plank above himself in demonstration; it would easily create shade for his whole body. "A couple of people looked at me like I was crazy on my way here, but it worked, didn't it? Oh, and thank you for having a shaded porch."

"You..." George stares as Dream sets the plank aside. "You could have waited until night, you know."

“I know, but,” Dream crosses his arms, almost self-consciously. “I couldn’t wait.”

George is at a loss for words. *He genuinely cares. He wants to spend time with me. For no reason, other than to spend time with me.* His body feels tense, staring up at bright eyes, ones that now held new meaning. *You’re pushing aside your own needs for me.*

George doesn’t realize he’s been staring.

Dream sinks into himself a little. “Sorry, I- sorry. That’s creepy. You...you need time, still. I get it. It’s alright. I’m sorry, I’ll-” Just as Dream takes a step back, ready to leave once again George grabs him by the forearm.

Dream looks down at him, expectant and shocked. It makes George’s insides dissolve into a million pieces. “That’s not it.” George admits, and Dream steps back to where he was. “I just didn’t think that you’d...”

“What?” Dream’s voice is patient.

“That you’d care. Like that.” George confesses. “I’m glad you’re here. I’m so, so, *so glad* that you’re here.”

Words of truth ring between them, vulnerable and waiting to be acknowledged. George can’t help the smile that spreads across his face at seeing Dream’s cheeks darken.

“Alright, alright.” Dream settles, looking down at George’s hand which was still clinging onto him. George abruptly pulls away once he notices how long it’s been lingering there. Dream rests a hand over the part of his arm that George was touching, fingers tracing the skin in thought. “Um, just so you know, it might take a while for me to get used to that.”

“Getting used to what?” George asks. “The...touch?”

“A little,” Dream admits. “It’s not the touch itself, I guess. Just that- that you’re doing it. Even after you know...” He makes a vague gesture to himself, then to his mouth. “You know.”

George smiles sympathetically. “You worry a lot.”

“I don’t worry enough.” Dream counters. “And I should worry. I have a lot of reasons to.”

“Okay, well right now, *I’m* worried about these dumb neighbors seeing some crazy person with a giant piece of wood at my doorstep.” George jokes, stepping to hold his door open.

“You’re sure? It’s okay for me to come in?” Dream questions, holding an arm to the doorframe as if to see if it will hurt him. “I don’t wanna overwhelm you- or scare you. Or invade your space, or-”

“Dear god, just-” George sighs, and grabs Dream by his shirt and pulls him into his house, closing the door behind him. He whirls around to see Dream awkwardly hovering his hands at his sides, eyes wide and uneasy. George sighs. “There. Chill out, okay?”

Shakily, Dream answers. “O-Okay.”

George smiles softly. “Good.” He walks past Dream and towards his couch, reaching to rearrange newspapers and mugs at the coffee table. “I’m just gonna be cleaning up a bit, so don’t mind me. You can sit or whatever.”

Following George into the house, Dream hesitantly takes a seat at the couch, opposite to the side with bunched up quilts. George notices him looking around more as he speaks. “You normally are super uptight about your cleaning, I don’t think I’ve seen your house with any kind of mess before.” The smile could be heard in his voice. “Must be a new record for you.”

George reaches up to a shelf on his book display, trying to place a couple of disarrayed novels back to their respective spots. “Heh, yeah...” He trails off. *It’s a mess because of you.* He laments. *I couldn’t focus on anything but you. The fact that I thought I’d lost you.* He stands on the tip of his toes, still unable to reach the shelf he needs. A hand meets his, taking the book out of his hold.

“Here.” Dream says, placing the book in an empty spot. When Dream’s chest brushes George’s back, *deja vu* rushes through him.

“*What’s the matter, Georgie?*” Against his kitchen counter, Dream’s voice had been raw, dangerous. “*You smell so good right now.*”

George's face *burns* . When Dream steps away, he nearly buckles at his knees.

Dream seems to take notice, brows rising at his reddened face. "You okay?"

George swallows, making eye contact with him. The consideration in Dream's eyes were more obvious now, after the mental image of him days ago, when those same eyes were smug and unrelenting.

You're gonna be the death of me. George thinks.

"Yeah...yeah, yeah, I'm fine. I'm fine."

Curious, Dream tilts his head, before it seems the realization hits him. "*Oh.*" Dream says, shrinking into himself.

Is he thinking about it, too?

Dream speaks again. "Sorry for..." He trails off, and he reaches a hand up to cover his face, sitting back down on the couch. "I was so insensitive, before. Just because you- I mean- I really shouldn't have done those things. I should've taken time to just think- I didn't know at the time... how I felt."

George takes a seat next to him on the couch, but not close enough to touch. "How you felt...about what?"

A long pause. "About you." Dream sinks his face into his hands more. "I kept using the excuse that I just...I just really wanted to drink your blood. And that's why I liked pushing you around like that."

Intrigued and vulnerable, George responds in a quiet voice. "Was that true?"

"No," Dream says, but then backtracks. "Well, kinda, but- I don't know. Well, I know I care about

you. I know that.”

George’s heart warms. *I know I care about you, too.*

“But,” Dream continues, seeming to struggle with articulating his feelings into words. “It’s so confusing. My thoughts have two ways they work, most of the time. It’s like- my normal thoughts, then my instinct thoughts. And you sorta make them both jumble together and think at the same time.”

“Huh.” George says, genuinely fascinated and strangely flattered. “So... is that why you didn’t bite me at first, then..?”

“Yeah.” Dream runs both hands through his hair before sitting up with an exhale. “I didn’t really know what to do. I’m just glad that I kinda know how I feel about you now.”

“And...how is that?” *Tell me that you need me more than anything, like I need you.*

“I feel...” Dream looks at him, staring through him as if to analyze every part of his being. George swears he can hear words that Dream wants to say, but doesn’t. “I feel like I want to be around you. Because I like it. And you’re fun.”

George rolls his eyes with a grin. “Okay, you can stop now.”

Dream smiles, a low giggle escaping his lips as he leans on his elbows towards George. “And you’re nice. And cool. And short.”

“That last one wasn’t even a compliment.”

“And good at cooking. And, umm...you have a cool accent. And you’re cute.”

George stands with an abashed grin, walking away so that Dream can’t see his face. “Okay, okay, I’m getting back to cleaning. I’m not putting up with this.”

He picks up some dishes off his kitchen counter and places them in the sink, thankful that Dream relented in his affection rampage for now. Grabbing a rag, he begins to wipe down the counter, clearing it of crumbs and stains. He watches Dream wander out of the living room and into the hall near his front door.

After a few mindless minutes of George straightening up the kitchen and wiping counters, Dream speaks up. "What's this?"

George turns to see Dream standing at his hall closet. *The* closet. He reaches to pull the doors open.

"Wait, don't-!"

Before George can stop him, Dream pulls the folding doors open, and his face pales immediately, eyes growing wide. George runs over to him as fast as his legs can carry him, slamming the doors back into place and whirling around to face him.

"Don't look in there!" George spits out, not intending to come off as harsh as he did.

Face aghast, Dream sputters. "I-I'm sorry! I didn't know- I won't go in there. I won't. Sorry. I'm so sorry."

Sighing with a release of anxiety, George straightens up and looks down at his feet. "It's okay."

A beat of strained silence. "That was a lot of silver." Dream mutters.

George clenches his eyes shut, ashamed. "I know. I'm sorry. I would get rid of it, but it's also for my safety." He swallows, reaching a hand out to Dream's. Uncertain, Dream holds his hand out, and George takes it gently. "I will never use those things on you again." He holds Dream's larger hand tighter. "I promise. No matter what."

"I..." Dream sighs, rubbing his thumb along the back of George's palm. "I know. Sorry for looking in there."

"Don't worry about it, really." George pulls his hand back, conscious of Dream's slight tremble once they had been touching for a bit. He smiles up at him. "I probably won't need them much

anymore, right?"

Dream smiles back with a glimpse of mischievousness, taking the hint. "Yeah. 'Cause I'll beat the shit out of anyone that gets near you."

"Okay," George holds the bridge of his nose as Dream laughs lightly. "Maybe don't do that unless you have to."

"Fine, fine." Dream rolls his eyes. "Whatever you want, princess."

"*Princess?*"

Seeming to become more comfortable, Dream mindlessly picks up a quilt from the couch and begins trying to fold it. "What, you like that name?"

George returns to the kitchen and finalizes his cleaning, placing rags back in their respective places. He's far enough that Dream can't see his red face.

"No," George replies, rearranging something in a cabinet with faint clicking noises. "You have a weird obsession with naming me things."

There's a stretch of silence, and George finally gets everything back in order for the most part. Satisfied, he stands, still facing the wall when he closes the cabinet. "Okay, finally."

Just as he turns around, he squeals as there's a flash of darkness and a blanket is over him in an instant, giddy laughter around him.

"Dream!" George accuses, and in his blindness he feels a pair of arms swoop him off of the ground, and starts spinning him in circles in a fit of laughter. George can't help but laugh at the situation, too.

"Woooo!" Dream cheers as they spin faster, and eventually come to a stop. The moment he's freed from Dream's arms, George shoves the blanket off of himself with batting hands.

“What the hell was that for?” George says in a bout of giggles, hardly managing to catch his breath. *I felt so light in your arms.* Dream beams down at him, eyes glinting with joy and admiration. *I want you to hold me again. Hold me forever.*

“Just ‘cause.” Dream replies snidely, taking the blanket out of George’s grip easily. Instead of leaving to go set the blanket back, he furrows his brows and smiles brightly down at him.

“Heh, your hair is all messed up now.” He reaches a hand out to George’s head, brushing his fingers through his hair tenderly.

George freezes at first, but then leans into it, eyes fluttering shut and feeling warm at the touch. Seeing as how Dream was being reserved about touch for the most part, this might be the most he gets in a while. *Should enjoy it while it lasts.*

“Still like a cat.” Dream muses fondly.

“I told you, you have a weird obsession with naming me things.” George says breathlessly. He smiles a little, as the hand is retracted. He immediately misses the touch.

I might as well have, like, purred or something.

“No, I don’t.”

“Yes, you do.”

“Whatever.”

The next day Dream shows up again, this time after dark.

They spend some time talking about anything and everything under the sun. (Not literally, of course, since that would actually be very dangerous for Dream).

Dream questions him about things in his house, which George is happy to show and explain to him.

Eventually they settle on the couch. Not close, but they aren't avoiding each other. They'd gotten used to keeping a distance after a bit.

"You're wearing the same vest you wore on the night of that party." George points out.

"Oh, yeah." Dream chuckles. "Um...I am."

"Where did you get the outfit anyway?" George asks, tilting his head slightly.

Dream flushes, embarrassed. "I...I stole it." He admits, placing a hand on the back of his red neck. "I'm sorry."

"I figured, it's okay." George nodded. "Do you...not have many clothes?"

Dream shrugged, "I mean, yeah, kind of. I don't really buy stuff of course so I don't have clothes to wear."

"You can have some of mine! I have some hand-me-downs from my dad that I didn't grow into, and stuff from the market I bought that were too big. My size probably won't fit but, um, I can look for those." *Is this weird? Is it weird to offer him my clothes? Surely we're close enough for stuff like that to be normal, right?*

Dream's eyes light up. "That would be great."

"Good. Okay." George turns and walks into his bedroom.

Through digging around the boxes of random, unworn clothes in the back of his closet he musters up a few outfits that he figures could fit the man's larger stature.

Emerging from his room he finds Dream folding some quilts from in front of the couch. *He's folding them wrong. Cute.*

"You don't have to do that," George chooses to say, instead of making fun of him. "But thank you. It looks nice."

“Really?” Dream perks up, like a dog. George can’t hold back his smile at his eagerness.

“Yes,” George says, further encouraging him. “You did very good, Dream. Good job.”

Dream smiles shyly to himself, muttering a small thanks as he finishes setting down the last quilt. For someone so dangerous, Dream is a sucker for praise. And of course, George finds it adorable.

Going to his bedroom and going through his closet, pushing away clothes he wore often and going to the back for larger clothes, he picks out a form fitting, black sleeveless undershirt, a white coat with ruffled sleeves and collar to go over it, and a pair of beige pants that were baggy to the knees, but being buttoned on the sides from the calf down. They were more casual than the roughed up clothes Dream currently had, but still formal enough to wear around the village. Satisfied, George heads back to the living room.

“Here’s the clothes, I think they should fit alright.” George smiles lightly, holding up his armful of an outfit too oversized for him to wear.

Dream gingerly takes the clothes from his hands. “Thanks, could...could I go put these on?”

“Of course.” George nods, pointing to the restroom. Dream makes his way to the restroom and closes the door, clicking the lock behind him. The brunet turns to the living room and stacks all the messily folded quilts on the side of the sofa.

When Dream emerges from the bathroom with the click of the door closing behind him, George freezes at the sight before him.

“It’s a little hot in here,” Dream says casually, gesturing to the overshirt hanging from his right hand. Without it on, George can see the exposed skin of his shoulders, light brown freckles dancing across him and even a few random speckles down his arms, where lightly toned muscles are evident. “So I thought I’d just keep this with me for later, if that’s okay?”

Blinking, feeling his throat get tight, George responds after a few seconds too long. “Yeah. Yeah that’s fine.” *I want to touch his shoulders. I want to feel them under my fingers, under my nails.*

Raising a naive eyebrow in confusion, Dream looks down at himself, bashful color evident in his cheeks when he smiles. “What? Why’re you looking at me like that?”

George speaks the words before he can convince himself to not say them. “You look good in that.” He says coyly, knowing it would get a reaction out of Dream.

Huffing, Dream brushes past him, placing a hand on his shoulder and gently squeezing. “Not so bad yourself.”

Feeling hot, George turns around as Dream grins mischievously, walking away before George can retaliate completely.

“You’re an idiot!” George calls down the hallway, the only response being a semi-distant chuckle.

They’re seated on George’s roof again.

The sky deepens with each passing moment. From above, they’re able to see the town through the trees. There are some lanterns lit downtown, illuminating the shops closing for the day. The stars peek from above, like table salt on jet black granite.

“It started to get more and more obvious that- that I couldn’t kill you. And that I wasn’t going to be able to. But also, I didn’t want to leave you.”

George feels pink flourish on his cheeks. “So that’s your standard for liking someone.” He adds, sarcastic.

Dream huffs in half amusement. “I guess so. To be fair, it takes a lot of effort to make me *not* want to kill people. Everyone is annoying.”

“I hate that I agree with you.” George grins.

“I’m glad you’re an exception. I was worried after a while that I might never even talk to you again.” Dream admits with a sorrowful twinge in his voice. “So, I would file down my fangs. I’d just smoothen the points every day, in hopes that you’d never find out what I am.”

George turns to face the vampire. Dream turns as well to match him.

He'd done that for me. Hindered his own ability to feed himself.

He gently cups Dream's face, the latter slightly flushing in response. "Open."

Dream's eyes grow wide in a frantic look. "Are you crazy?" He asks hysterically. "I can hardly *sit* next to you, and you wanna risk-"

"Just relax," George reassures, trailing his thumb under Dream's eye. He leans into it. "Just focus on me, alright?"

Dream sighs uneasily. "O-Okay. Be careful, please."

Dream hesitantly opens his mouth, allowing George to look at his fangs. The brunet runs a delicate finger over the point, pulling a finger back quickly when he nearly pricks it in the process. *Even after being dulled days ago, it's sharp to the touch. They must grow back quickly.*

It feels unnatural to be getting so close to a vampire, literally touching fangs and not worrying about his life being endangered. The only times he'd gotten to look at vampire teeth like this was after a kill, but even then he didn't like to linger looking at them.

He runs a finger to his bottom row of teeth, which also have sharper fangs for canines.

He thinks about how Dream could have gotten food. *It must've been a struggle. I hope he never went hungry*, he thinks uneasily, knowing it's likely he did. Some tender feeling blooms in his chest, aching with concern.

He remembers what Dream had said, letting his grip falter and allow him some space. *He's been doing this to himself. Just to hide from me.* He tries not to imagine the pain Dream must have put himself through. He retracts his hand letting it rest on Dream's cheek when his mouth closes.

"You don't have to do this anymore, you know." George says, voice soft.

"Are you sure? I don't want you to be afraid or in dang-" Dream begins.

"Dream, don't. Please."

Dream quiets. He sighs softly in defeat, leaning in and resting his head in George's neck. George wraps a gentle arm around him, trying to say *it's okay, I understand. I'm not afraid of you. I'm here now.*

Fulfilled, comfortable silence holds them both. While George would never admit it, all the times they were touching were the times he wanted to last forever. If he could stay like this forever, he would.

They enjoy it for a bit.

Suddenly, Dream's delicate, timid voice breaks the silence. "My name is Clay."

George opens his eyes, not realizing he had closed them. The words were so quiet, George wondered if he had imagined them. "What?" He asks, careful to not scare away the vulnerability Dream currently showed. He leans back a little, their sides still touching. Dream's expression was distant, fragile jade being fogged over in a hazey expression.

"My real name. It's Clay." He affirms, the tone he spoke in was one that George had rarely heard before, if at all. "That was my name before...nevermind."

Grinning lazily, George settles back into Dream's arms. "I knew there was no way your *actual* name was Dream."

George feels Dream's chest shake with light laughter. "Maybe I was joking, you don't know. Maybe my parents named me Dream when I was born."

George smirks at an idea. "Yeah, wouldn't doubt it. You're so *dreamy*."

Dream just laughs again, but doesn't deny it.

He trusts me, George thinks. He trusts me with his real self.

And the lighthearted moment passes as quickly as it arrived. George's voice is honey, "What name do you prefer?"

"I don't mind either." Dream says. "Maybe we can stick to Dream, though."

"Okay. Hi, Dream."

Dream smiles, closing his eyes. He lets out a soft breath of air, "Hi, George."

"George?" Dream whispers, keeping his eyes trained on the blanket of stars above them.

Another night on this roof; they'd started gravitating towards it after a while. Talking to the sky was easier than talking to each other. At first, it was for fun. To enjoy stargazing, and George could point out which stars had the stupidest names. But George's rooftop had become a place of conversation, *real* conversation over the past two days. When they were here, it meant they could talk about anything.

And that's why after talking for a couple of hours, Dream finally brings himself to ask about one of the things he feared most.

The tension is threatening, air silent save for the rumble of quiet wind.

"When you saw me," Dream says gently, breaking the silence. He speaks as if one wrong syllable could shatter George. "When you saw how I acted. And how I- I killed Techno..."

George's throat tightens.

"Did you think I was evil?" He asks the question point blank. It feels strangely relieving to say it out loud. It was something he'd almost considered the truth at this point. There was no way that George was genuinely okay with him. He didn't deserve George's understanding. He might as well rip the bandaid off already.

George is silent. Every passing moment twists a knife in his chest, clotting his ribs with anxiety

and shame.

“Please, just say something. Be honest with me.” He pleads softly.

George pauses for another moment, but arrives at an answer. “You were... scary. You were scary, Dream.” He slowly crosses his legs while in the midst of thought. The blond dips his head. The night wind slows and rolls to a gentle breeze.

“But... what I saw wasn’t evil.” Dream perks up, and George meets his eyes with the most sincerity he’s ever had in his life. “It was you. And you’re not evil.” *You protected me.*

Dream’s eyes are shiny with the promise of oncoming tears, but he doesn’t let them spill. Though sweet, George’s answer sinks him into further disbelief.

“Are you scared of me?”

George turns to him, shocked by the sudden uneasiness that slipped into his voice. “What?”

“Are you afraid? Of me.” Dream clarifies, locking eyes with him. The night’s shadows flood his face. Dream can feel his guilt being consumed in the sky’s darkness.

“No...no, I couldn’t be.” George says, finally. He intertwines their hands securely, as if to remind Dream that he wasn’t a feather, and that he was strong, too. And unparalleled kind of strong. “Not anymore.”

A moment of silence fills the air. George wants to kiss Dream’s hand. “When you’re mad, sometimes...it frightens me a little.” The confession is remorseful.

“I would never hurt you, George.”

“I know, Dream.” He murmurs.

George lifts their intertwined hands and kisses the back of Dream’s hand, feather-light warmth blooming across the tan skin where his lips had been. He hopes it will communicate what he can’t, verbally. He looks up to match Dream’s yearning gaze. *I hope you know. I hope you know I love you.*

He holds Dream's palm against his cheek. "I know."

Mending Faith

Chapter Summary

i love updating this fic as much as you love reading it so I always look forward to your comments...you should totally comment eheheh

Warnings for chapter 13: language, descriptions of death, violence, panic attacks

enjoy :D

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

It's a quiet night at George's place. The two are seated in his living room. The sounds of the night dance outside the house, but nothing comes in. The house is silent, save for the sound of George's pulse in his ears. He wonders if Dream can hear it. Telling from what he knows about vampires and their enhanced senses, George knows he probably can. His fingers twitch restlessly at the thought, still struggling to embrace the full ramifications of Dream being a real, actual vampire.

A vampire that is currently sitting an arms length away from him on his couch. Calm. *Not* attacking him.

It's strangely comforting. Not in the normal sense, but knowing that Dream is able to control himself around George, and actively chooses to stay, well...

It makes him feel *selfish*. So, so selfish. Dream is this way for him. For him alone.

Although surreal, he loves it.

He feels a finger tap lightly on the back of his hand, catching his attention, looking up into Dream's uncertain expression expectantly.

"George, I haven't been completely honest with you." Dream says slowly, almost sounding as if he didn't want to say it at all.

Oh.

I thought we were done with secrets.

How much else could he have hidden from me? What else could I not know after all of this?

George looks at him, not upset but feeling tense and hurt. His muscles are tight beneath his skin. He waits, prompting Dream to elaborate.

“When I was a kid,” Dream sighs, collecting his thoughts. “I-I quickly realized I’d have to hurt a human whether I liked it or not if...I wanted to live like other vampires.”

George nods, unsure of where this could be going. It makes him uneasy nonetheless.

“And one day, there was a boy. Only looked a little older than me.” Dream says, voice shaking for an unknown reason. “I’d tried to kill him. But I soon realized that...I didn’t have it in me.” The words are forced out of his mouth, the whole conversation feeling as though his teeth were being pulled.

George stiffens, imagining a ruthless, young Dream attempting to kill another boy. Even after seeing him kill that other vampire before, it’s a hard image to make in his head. Dream wasn’t a killer at heart. It’s weird to consider that he could do such a thing to a human, let alone a child. He nods, withholding judgement for the time being. “Okay...”

“It was too late by the time I realized I didn’t want him dead. He was already...bleeding out...”

How familiar.

George feels an unease rising in his throat, feeling as if something were about to crash in on him. *What does this have to do with me?*

“B-But, he didn’t...he didn’t die, George.” Dream mutters, gaze narrowed down at his own hands which were now retracted in towards himself, his frame trembling slightly. “But I remember the worst injury I left was...”

A pause. George stares him down, needing to know what was *so important* that Dream of all people couldn't say it out loud. So he pushes, voice low. "What?"

Dream sinks into the couch cushions. "I left a really deep gash...in your left shoulder."

George stares. He feels suspended in time, and everything clicks at once.

Dream was the one who hurt me. George watches as Dream's face becomes submerged in a grimace, eyes shutting tight and lips pressed in a line.

It feels like George's heart goes empty. Shallow heartbeats. A bottomless pit swallows his internal being, leaving him to helplessly fall into the horrible realization. *Dream hurt me. Dream did this to me.*

His scar feels like it's burning beneath his shirt.

"Don't be mad." Dream whispers into his own hands, but George hardly registers it. "Please, *please* don't be mad."

"You..." George breathes, chest feeling void, sentences trickling dangerously between rage and despair. "Y-You...you did that? *You* did that to me?"

As Dream rakes his hands into his hair, George feels a flicker of sympathy in his ribcage, but is too upset to pay any attention to it. Dream seems to accept the words that continue to spill out of his mouth, allowing every syllable to sink in.

"My-" George chokes on emotion. "My whole fucking *life* I've been- been trying to kill vampires! To keep myself- and others safe, t-to try and *fix* myself!" He uses his arms in drastic gestures, mind running rapidly with growing hysteria. He notices the way it makes Dream flinch, but he doesn't acknowledge it. "And *now* you decide to tell me?!"

"I-I didn't know for a bit-" Dream murmurs quietly, but George cuts him off in an instant.

"You're saying that you- you *didn't* recognize me when we first met?"

“I didn’t!” Dream exclaims, raising his head and pleading with his eyes.

“Oh yeah, I’m *so* sure.” George laughs humorlessly, feeling a strain in his throat. “And I guess you’re gonna deny that that’s why you stuck around me, too? That I’m just here to make ‘*poor Dream*’ feel better?”

“Listen!” Dream cries, and suddenly grabs both of George’s wrists, who gasps sharply at the touch and tries to pull back, which has no effect.

“Let go of me! L-Let go!” George thrashes, and in an instant Dream lets go and George scrambles backwards on the couch, backing himself into the corner of the cushions with ragged breaths and a face drained of color.

“Sorry,” Dream says, so softly it hurts. “Sorry, I-I’m sorry, please just...let me explain.” He scoots to the other end of the couch to give George room, but George doesn’t move from his defensive position.

Swallowing with difficulty, George rasps out a small reply. “What is it?” *Does he not understand how much he changed my life? How badly that scarred me, how badly that hurt me?*

I could’ve had a normal life. I could’ve been what other kids wanted me to be. What my parents wanted me to be.

He took it all from me.

Dream sighs, mildly relieved at his willingness to listen. “I didn’t know that you were the same one until...until I saw your journal.”

George’s eyes narrow harshly. “What journal?”

“The...” Dream winces in guilt, both for snooping through George’s things and at the mere fact that he’s not human at this moment, where being human would definitely make the situation less delicate. “The one with all your notes about vampires...and their weaknesses. That one. I found it by accident.”

George's posture softens slightly, but it's hardly noticeable. "You...You read that...?" He grimaces, thinking back to all of the embarrassingly vulnerable things he's written in that journal. *Sometimes I didn't even use it for notes*, George recalls painfully. *Sometimes I'd just use it to get my emotions out. Ones that I didn't want Sap to listen to, or that I didn't want inside myself.*

"You do realize how *private* that is, right?" He hisses.

"I didn't read all of it, just until...until I saw your description of what happened. Those years ago." Dream trails off in a pensive tone, voice dropping from frantic to somber. "It's what made me realize that I didn't want to hurt you. I couldn't, not after seeing how hurt you already were because of me."

"That's why you told me that stuff before," George says with sudden insight, body slowly relaxing to sit normally. "When you told me that you're sorry that you ruined my life. And that you want me to have it back."

"I never wanted to tell you." Dream admits. "I was never going to, but-" He stops abruptly.

George slows his breathing enough to make his voice steady again, suspending his anger for just a moment. "Yes?"

Dream sighs, and makes eye contact with George for the first time in a bit. His look is full of an unmistakable sorrow. "But that was selfish. You deserve to know. If you...if you never want to see me again, I understand, George."

But despite the rage, fear and sadness clenching his heart, George's response still comes without hesitation. "No."

Dream perks up, wide eyed in shock. "Seriously?"

George sighs, a shaky arm assisting him in sitting up properly on the couch, still distanced far from the other. "I...I just...I just hate that you waited so long to tell me. But I guess that wasn't really your fault, either."

"I wouldn't have spoken to you ever again if I knew who you were." Dream says. "I was horrified

by what I did to you, then...I still am, honestly. No matter how much I try..." Dream drops his gaze to his lap. "I really don't fit in anywhere."

George watches Dream get lost in a fogged-over look, seemingly pondering his own problems. *I would usually feel like he's being selfish for making this about himself, but I guess you don't get much social interaction as a vampire. Can't blame him.*

George huffs sadly. "Yeah, me neither."

"I'm sorry." Dream mumbles. He seems to repeat it under his breath again but George doesn't notice.

The atmosphere is so thick it could be cut with a knife.

"Thank you for telling me." George eventually says, tiredly. *Should I be thanking him? I don't know. But it feels right.*

"I should be thanking you for not throwing me out." Dream says tenderly in return, smiling weakly.

"I don't know if I can forgive you, fully..." George trailed off, sinking into his shoulders. "I-I'm just being honest. It kinda...It's just not a very easy thing to forget. I don't know if I'll ever be able to truly be...okay..."

Dream hums, leaning away. "Yeah...yeah, I expected that. Honestly, I- hah, I had sorta convinced myself that you'd kill me once you found out."

"What?" George turns to him, bewildered and almost amused. "What kind of psychopath do you take me for?"

Raising his hand in useless defense, Dream sputters, "I-I just knew how- I didn't- I thought you'd hate me, and sorry, but having a bunch of weapons in your house specifically meant for killing vampires doesn't really ease my worries."

George softens the slightest bit. *He must not be used to having a potential weakness. I wonder if he feels in danger when I get mad, just like he does to me.*

Apparently seeing the shift in George's thoughts, Dream straightens his posture in an attempt to backtrack. "It's okay, though, y-you promised, you promised you wouldn't hurt me. But you'd be justified, anyways..." Dream swallows, and George looks up to meet his eyes before he finishes his sentence in a quiet mumble. "...by killing me."

Dream sounds so resolute, so pensively honest, and George's heart sinks. *He really believes that.*

George flits his gaze down to his own hands, relaxing their death grip on his own knees, and back up at Dream, who had turned away completely, perhaps trying to say that their conversation was over.

What happened to you? George thinks with a pang of regret. *Where did the part of you go that smiled so much, the part of you that never missed an opportunity to compliment me, the part of you gave me a reason to get out of bed in the morning other than old vengeance? Where did my Dream go, the one that dances with me with deep confident strides, not waiting for me to catch up?*

George's shoulders droop as he watches Dream further retreat into his own mind.

Don't run from me. George thinks. *I don't want you to be alone anymore.*

And in an instant, George throws his arms around Dream's waist, causing the vampire to jump from the sudden physical contact.

He nestles his face into the crook of Dream's neck, surprised at how warm he is for supposedly being undead. "I miss you." He whispers into Dream's skin.

There's a long pause, and Dream doesn't act for a while. George knows this is probably pushing his instincts a bit, especially having his neck this close to him, but George knows better than to be afraid now.

And to his relief, two arms return the hug with only slight hesitation. They rest gently on his back first, before fully wrapping around his figure and pulling him close with desperation that George reciprocates, pulling Dream so that their chests are flush, indulging in an amount of affection they

had both missed so, so much.

“I miss you too.” Dream responds after a bit, just as quiet. George smiles, *genuinely* smiles for what felt like the first time in a while.

And in Dream’s arms like this, engulfed by an overwhelming sense of safety and love, the thought hits him. *We could be real.* Dream presses his cheek into George’s hair. *I could have this. We could really, really have this.*

George lets out a breath that seemed to release an overwhelming amount of tension in his chest. “Don’t leave. Please, never leave.” George mumbles, gripping Dream tighter. He feels the way Dream’s breath hitches at the words. He continues. “I would never hurt you. Never. I know you’re not like that. I know you couldn’t help it before.”

George can feel Dream’s chest hum with his words. “You’re too nice to me,” George can also hear the smile in his voice. “There must be something wrong with you.” He says playfully.

“Maybe,” George responds easily. “At least I cook my food first before eating it, though.”

“You’re so mean.” Dream replies, the laughter lightly shaking him.

George is the one to part away first, not wanting to make Dream more uncomfortable with further prolonging their physical touch. When they look at each other again, his heart beams with pride. “You didn’t even start shaking that time.” He says.

Dream grins shyly. “Yeah...I guess I’m getting a little better.”

“I knew you would.” George returns to sitting next to Dream, but closer this time. Comfortable. Close.

Dream chuckles softly, before turning into a slight frown. “I’m...I’m really sorry, though. Really. I honestly thought you’d hate me.”

“Too bad for you, now that I know how much of a simp you are, I don’t think I could go back to

being afraid of you.”

Dream raises a brow. “What the hell is a simp-”

“I hope you know that...I really trust you, Dream.” George places a hand on Dream’s knee, expression breaking into a wide smile when he doesn’t get a flinch in response. “It might take a bit for me to fully get used to...well, *you*, but that’s okay. I-” *love you*. He stops himself. “I care about you.”

“You’re sweet.” Dream says softly. “I don’t deserve this.”

“You do. I want us to work.” George says, heart aching.

“Yeah...I-I know.” Dream mutters and stares into his lap, into his hands. George can see the gears turning, mind at work. Green eyes shimmering reflectively under the dim light. *He still feels guilty.*

“...Wanna see the scar you made?” George asks, half joking. It’s a weak attempt to lighten the mood, but it seems to pull Dream out of his spiraling thoughts.

“No, George, you don’t-”

“It’s okay,” George reassures. He takes a deep breath, letting the air fill his tired lungs. “I want to show you.”

Let me fix this.

“I-If you’re comfortable.”

George nods and shakily reaches up to unbutton his shirt.

His hands travel down the front of his shirt, unbuttoning the buttons one by one and shrugging it off.

Slipping it down his shoulder makes him feel like he's revealing too much, until he sees the way Dream's gaze softens and his heart melts.

The blonde eyes his scar for a moment, hurt eyes trailing over the large injury.

"God," Dream murmurs, placing a gentle hand on top of George's scarred shoulder. "I..."
He seems at a loss for words as he stops.

It's okay. It wasn't before, but it is now. I don't want to be angry anymore. George looks down to his hands, fiddling with his fingernails and the sleeve on his half-donned shirt. *It was a long time ago. I know you've changed. Even then, you didn't let me die. No matter how many reasons you had to kill me then.*

I'm so tired. I just want you to make me feel okay.

I want you to be okay with me.

Please forgive me in the same way.

"Um," George mutters, before clearing his throat. "While we're being honest, I guess I should tell you that I...I'm not innocent either..." George's gaze drops to his hands, looking ashamed.

Dream trails the pads of his fingers along the discolored skin apologetically. "What do you mean..?" He asks, patient.

"Well I...you know I had all those weapons, right?"

"Yeah..?"

"Well," George's tone drips with anxiety. "I...I used them. A lot."

Dream's hand stops moving on his back, seeming to sense the gravity of his thoughts. "How many did you kill?"

George sinks into a slouch, staring grimly at his hands. "You don't wanna know."

"George," Dream's voice is warm. "It's okay. I won't be upset, I promise."

A beat of silence. "Sixteen." *Probably injured a lot more too.*

"What?"

George buries his face into his hands. "I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I- it was-"

"How?" Dream asks. "You're...that's- George, how the *hell* are you still alive?!"

"What..?" George looks up, voice cracking slightly. *Stop sounding so weak. You sound pathetic.*

Dream's shocked face turns worried in an instant. He wraps his arms around George gently, and trails a hand to his hair and combs through it. "Hey, hey, don't cry, please?" Dream asks soothingly. "I didn't mean to make you upset."

"It could have been you," George whispers, his shaky frame sinking into Dream's hold. "I could have- I know it's bad, I'm sorry, I'm sorry-"

"It wasn't me, though." Dream whispers into his hair. "I'm here. I'm right here. You were just doing what you thought was right."

"Y-You're... not mad?" George asks weakly, a shaky hand coming to rest on Dream's waist.

"Why would I be?" Dream answers. "They're the ones that convinced me that I have to kill people to be normal. I don't exactly like them, George."

"Wait," George pulls back suddenly. "You haven't...killed anyone before..?"

Dream's eyebrows raise in surprise. "What, no! I-I couldn't." He pauses, then reaches a hand to rub the back of his neck. "Well...Techno was the first." George sees him shiver.

And he did that for me.

He violated his own moral code to save my life.

"Huh..." George looks up at him blankly, wiping his eyes. After a moment, he finds himself smiling sadly to himself. "Hah... guess that makes me worse than you. I'm *actually* a killer."

"Okay, this is gonna sound horrible, but..." Dream starts, readjusting their position so that George is only holding onto one hand. It's probably for George's safety. The fact that he still gets to have physical contact with him at all as he talks makes it much more comfortable. "I don't think I've met a single vampire that...has been a good person. Like, ever. Honestly, they probably deserved it."

George's jaw drops. "You did not just say that."

"*What?* Can you blame me? All vampires that were born as vampires are just... *like that*. You must know after hunting them that they seriously don't have any moral code."

"Yeah...yeah." George settles, looking out the window thoughtfully.

Then it hits him.

"Wait, so you *weren't* born a vampire?"

He waits for a response, and turns when there isn't one. Dream is staring ahead, seemingly lost in thought. He answers, voice raw and authentic. "No. No, I wasn't."

George swallows. *An unpleasant memory, probably.*

"You want to...?" George trails off quietly. Dream focuses back in, and closes his hand a little

tighter around George's as they make eye contact. "...talk about it..?"

Anxiety and solemnity tenses Dream's expression. Eventually, he speaks up in a hoarse whisper. "I was with some...friends," He starts, George intertwines their fingers. "Bad kids, I found out. We were fourteen."

George nods, making sure to know Dream feels comfortable and knows that he's listening.

Dream takes a deep breath, and continues. "They thought it'd be funny to leave me tied to a tree. And they...they left me there." The grip on George's hand becomes tighter. "I tried to get help, I fought. A lot."

"Oh my god." George whispers, taken back.

"A few hours later, a vampire found me. I-I remember them saying something like *'It's too small to be a meal'*... I guess it was because I was so young. So then..." Dream trails off.

"That's when it happened." George finishes for him. Dream nods.

Then, George is surprised even more when he sees a tear fall down Dream's cheek. "They still got some blood from me." He says shakily.

"Oh god, I'm sorry. I'm sorry, it's alright." George assures softly, unsure what to do. He'd never seen Dream cry before this, he realizes. "That's awful, your friends were terrible. You didn't deserve any of that. I didn't mean to resurf-"

"No no, I'm okay." Dream wipes his cheek with his palm. His voice wavers. "M' sorry. Feels dumb to start crying right after...you started crying."

"It's okay to cry, Dream."

That seems to calm him a little because although he buries his face in his hands, George sees he's stopped shaking as badly.

He offers his arms out to hug Dream again, an offer which the taller takes immediately. He wraps his arms around George's waist, collapsing into him and buries his face in his shoulder, muffled sniffles emitting from next to the brunet's ear.

"It's okay." George repeats, comfort for the both of them.

Eventually, Dream relaxes into his arms, quieting. The hum of crickets outside the window aids George in zoning out, before a voice breaks the silence.

"God..." He begins, clearing his sore throat. "What are the chances that *you'd* be the human I tried to get? It could've been *literally* anyone else." He whines.

George huffs smugly. "Yeah, wish it had been Sapnap." He jokes. "Maybe then he'd be a little more sensitive." The end of his sentence breaks off into giggles, and Dream follows after.

"He'd probably smell so bad that I wouldn't want his blood anyways," Dream covers his face with one hand in his laughter. "I'd just run away."

The two of them, vampire and human, laugh genuinely together, even leaning on each other for support. Telling from the way Dream's body language is still relaxed, it seemed that things were finally starting to change.

George is glad that Dream told him the truth.

Like this, with nothing but honesty, he feels more at peace than ever. And telling from the way Dream laughs without bothering to cover his fangs that just barely peek out between his lips, he thinks that Dream probably feels the same way.

Eventually, when Dream's giggles die down, he speaks. "Thank you for...being you. Just...for being the way you are."

"You can't thank me for that." George scoffs.

"I can, and I am." Dream responds.

“Then, I could say the same.” George reasons. “Thank you for being you. You’re honest and kind and sensitive and...I feel like I can trust you with anything. Thank you.”

Dream beams. “You’ve changed my life, you know.”

“Really?” George asks, smiling quizzically. Dream gently reaches up with his hands and cups George’s face, locking eyes with him.

“More than you know.”

Dream is shirtless.

George wouldn’t be able to say that on many days, but he forgot that Dream said he was going to change a couple minutes ago, needed something from his bathroom, and here he is.

“ *George!* Get out!” Dream sputters in embarrassment, frantically trying to shove the remainder of his shirt over his head to cover his torso.

And of course, George laughs. And his face is red. From laughing.

It’s definitely from laughing.

Figuring the latter’s been embarrassed enough, he goes to close the door. That is, until his eyes lock onto something.

Dream’s right shoulder.

The gun wound from earlier has healed completely, leaving a large scar in its wake. *Oh no.*

He stops laughing, hovering in the doorway uneasily as Dream covers it with the shirt. Unpleasant memories flood his mind, and he's suddenly being pulled under.

Why did I do that to him? God, what is my problem? He even told me then that he wasn't dangerous, and that he wasn't going to hurt me. I was so stupid.

A voice pulls him from the rising water, "I said get *out*, George. Not stand in the doorway and watch me change."

When he doesn't get a response, instead seeing the way George looks into his eyes with regret, he grows concerned. "You okay?"

"Your shoulder." George manages, with difficulty.

Dream looks at his own arm, pulling up the sleeve to reveal the scarred skin and damaged tissue. He realizes what George is worried about and swallows. "Hey, it's okay. It was a while ago, and I know you didn't mean it."

"I'm so sor-"

"George, save it. It's okay." Dream says, grabbing both George's shoulders gently. The shorter looks up to meet his gaze, watching the way his brows furrow in worry. "Besides, now we match, right?" He smiles weakly.

It takes George a moment to understand what he means before he realizes.

"Wh- *Dream!* That's so messed up!" He bursts into laughter, weight lifting off his chest.

"You laughed, though." Dream grinned, rolling his eyes.

"This isn't what normal friends do," George laughs.

Friends.

“Are we friends?” Dream lets slip.

George stiffens, furrowing his brows. “What?” He asks, accent thick. “I...of course we’re friends.”

“Well, yeah, but...” Dream falters, and George feels a tension suffocating his chest as the words leave Dream’s mouth. “...friends don’t...y’know...”

George leans against the doorframe, arms crossing over himself protectively, smiling snarkily. “Are you even attracted to men? How would you know?”

“I know I’m attracted to you.” Dream says, causing George to feel as if he was just chucked into a pit of fire with how warm he felt.

“That has to count for *something*, right?” Dream continues, “I mean, *trust me*, there is zero, absolutely no doubt in my mind that I am attracted to you, like, it’s super obvious-”

“Dear *God* shut up!” George giggles, turning away from him and sinking into himself to look smaller. “Okay! Okay- I get it, you dumbass.”

Dream’s chuckles do not ease the warmth of his face. “Alright, what about you then, if you’re *so suspicious* of me and my feelings.” Dream mocks lightheartedly.

George turns back slowly to face Dream, and takes a deep breath in before speaking. “It might sound weird, but honestly, I’ve only ever been attracted to other guys my whole life.” The words come out as muttered, small, embarrassed.

“How is that weird?” Dream tilts his head to the side, confused.

George smiles sympathetically before looking down at his feet. “Heh, you really don’t know the difference, do you? You were never told otherwise.” George observes. Dream’s mannerisms when they had met the first time were now becoming more and more sensical. “It’s just that other people...don’t see it that way. There’s a reason I don’t tell anyone that I don’t like girls.”

“I don’t understand.” Dream frowns.

“It’s just highly frowned upon.” George sighs.

Dream looks concentrated, but he shakes his head slightly and meets George’s eyes. “Well...even so, we still don’t act like friends do. I know you feel it too.” He says tenderly, but not pressingly.

George breaks eye contact. “I do, Dream. But...I think we’re better off talking about this another time.” He confesses honestly, dipping his head. “I’m just so much more comfortable with the air clear right now. I know it’s been a rough few days so...can we save it? Please?”

He gently grabs Dream’s shirt, clutching the fabric. Dream wraps an arm around him. “Whatever makes you comfortable, George. We’ll talk about it later.”

It’s another day in George’s home.

The two of them have been spending a lot of time there together as of recent.

The moonlight shines, the pearly light barely peeking between the curtain folds. It illuminates the faces of two figures curled up on the sofa.

George sighs softly. He has a notebook perched on his knees that he’s writing in, resting his head against Dream’s shoulder.

He starts feeling like Dream’s shoulder feels tense, tight against his head. He goes to lift his head, before hearing a loud and quick *rip* .

He turns to Dream, but quickly looks further down when he notices the torn couch fabric, Dream’s nails digging into the cushion. The blond pulls away quickly, leaning away in an abrupt motion.

“I’m sorry...! It was just...I was really tempted. I’m sorry.”

George's breath hitches for a moment, looking down at the deep tear in the cushion in shock. "Woah- That's really..hah, that's a deep tear." George giggles nervously, the center of his brows tilting up slightly in worry. "You could've told me, you know."

"I- Ugh, I didn't want to, though." Dream groans in frustration. "I need to get better at this if we're going to- if I want to be close. I can't keep freaking out like this."

"I know it's not easy," George sympathizes, "You're not exactly...made to be this close to me. I'm impressed that you've been able to do this for so long, honestly." George looks into Dream's conflicted eyes, ones drenched in self-doubt and a deep adoration. *How tempted were you when you held me in my bed? How could anyone deny their instincts for so long? Did you really do that for me?*

"But that's why I want to try," Dream says. "Fuck my instincts. They're either gonna be okay with you willingly or I'm gonna drag 'em the whole way there. As long as it takes."

"As long as it takes." George repeats, a smile growing on his face. He lets out a soft breath of air.

He wants to be physically affectionate with Dream. He finds himself raking his eyes over the other's figure, wishing desperately to grasp his hands in his own to see the size difference, kiss his forehead till his lips are numb, among other things. He gently leans back against Dream's shoulder, closer this time.

The heat radiates off their bodies, pressed together in a comfortable way on the couch. George resumes, picking up his quill and propping his notebook on his knees. It only feels natural for their bodies to be revolving around each other like this.

George feels the way Dream's shoulder relaxes, melting into the touch. He moves his hand away from the tear and into his lap.

Dream sighs, breathing away all the tension, and George resumes his writing.

Tonight, the pair are on a walk.

The streets are lit by the dim and flickering street lanterns, illuminating the rocky path to the town square. Haphazardly growing vines entangle with cracked bricks of building walls, closed signs on the glass doors of local shops, and the quietness of a usually loud town fuels the feeling of intimacy as they walk inches apart from touching.

In a funny way, George is thankful for the fact that Dream can't go outside in daylight.

When it's like this, dark and silent except for the sound of their light footsteps on the concrete, George doesn't have to share any of this experience with anyone. Nobody else gets to see Dream's true self but him.

He realizes that it's been that way from the start.

George's stomach fills with butterflies, recalling their very first interactions.

A look into jade eyes, seeing a flicker of shock beneath confident lenses as George had removed Dream's mask. Dream's lie.

After seeing that same look, again and again, George realizes now that it wasn't an act then, either.

He really did make Dream reconsider everything in that moment, didn't he?

Does Dream know now, too, that George had truly wanted a connection, then? How badly he *needed* to be told that someone loved him, how pathetic he knew he was in that moment, but then throwing his shame to the stars.

Is that what made Dream hesitate?

Did Dream recognize it, after knowing that same feeling himself?

His gaze flits down to his right, where their hands glide with their walking motions, almost painfully close to touching. He feels the warmth when their knuckles brush together.

Before George can stop himself, he cautiously slips his hand into Dream's. He moves slowly, trying not to alarm Dream with the physical touch.

George looks up to Dream's face for a reaction, seeing nothing more than the stiffening of his shoulders. The hand around his freezes, then gently curls his fingers around George's palm.

The corners of George's lips twitch upwards in pride. Dream has made a lot of progress in the past week with the amount of touch that he can be comfortable with. And George is proud of him for it.

Turning the corner, they stop at the fountain, now cleaned of debris but still broken up. Dream swallows.

"Look," George gently shifts his hand out of Dream's grasp to grab at his arm, gesturing to the center. "This is where we met."

"Yeah." Dream smiles in amusement, "And what about it?"

"What if..." George looks down, then up again, eyes sparkling. "We were to share a little dance?"

Dream's smile drops slightly. "Oh...uh, I dunno, George...there's not even any music playing." He tries. George knows it's an excuse.

His reaction is a little disheartening, but George persists. *I want him to be comfortable with me.* He trails his hand down Dream's forearm, tenderly tracing lines back and forth over tanned skin and freckles. "Just pretend. Besides, I know what you're worried about."

"Yeah," Dream frowns at George's soothing touch. "A-And I have a good reason to be worried, idiot."

"Listen..." George uses his right hand to hold Dream's other arm, forcing Dream to face him directly. "If you don't ever try, how will you know? I mean, when we did stuff together before, you weren't even trying to control yourself, right?"

Dream hums skeptically. "That is true."

“So, give yourself some credit. If you didn’t hurt me then, you won’t hurt me now.” He smiles genuinely, hoping to lift the uncertain expression on Dream’s face. “Come on,” George’s eyes sparkle. “You might actually have fun.”

Dream tilts his head uncertainly. “I-I don’t know about this- What happens if- You could- I might- We-”

“Won’t you relax? I know you’re not going to hurt me.” George laces their hands together once more. “Please, just one song?”

He looks into Dream’s eyes, searching for an ounce of doubt or irritation. All he sees is wistful thinking.

Dream nods, suddenly determined. “Okay.” He smiles, hesitation melting away to George’s relief. “I can do this.”

Yes, you can.

Dream gingerly pulls the shorter against himself, slipping an eager hand around his waist and resting it on the small of his back. It feels familiar, a sense of nostalgia growing in both their chests. George chuckles, out of breath, despite not having done much of anything yet.

Dream is frozen in place; George can feel the lack of breathing from the fact that Dream’s chest was hardly rising or falling. He chuckles. “Calm down, God. You’d think I’m trying to kiss you or something with how stiff you are right now.” *Too soon?* George grimaces mentally, thinking back to the idiotic recklessness that he had confronted Dream with in the woods. *Please don’t be too soon.*

To his relief, Dream giggles lowly. “You would like that, wouldn’t you?”

George grips Dream’s hand more tightly in his, spitefully stepping as hard as he can on Dream’s shoe.

“Hey!” Dream accuses, devoid of any malice. “That hurt!”

“No it didn’t.” George replies smugly, giggling to himself as Dream raises his hand, suddenly spinning him around before returning to press their chests together.

“Okay, it didn’t.” Dream rolls his eyes, taking a step to their left that was definitely too far away to be unintentional as George nearly falls over at the abrupt pull.

“Oh my- stop stepping so wide, you- you *giraffe!*” George stumbles to stay in rhythm with Dream as the vampire continues to take long strides that looked comfortable for someone of his height, but felt anything but natural for someone of George’s average height.

“Rude!” Dream laughs, *genuinely* laughs in that way that George hadn’t heard since he’d found out what Dream really is. He’s thrilled, completely rejuvenated by the return of the sound from Dream’s lips.

So of course, he steps on Dream’s other foot, just as hard as last time.

Dream guffaws. “Oh my *god* , stop stepping on my feet!”

“I’m not!” George says, unable to hide the growing smile on his face as he steps on Dream’s foot *again*.

“You’re actually so annoying.” Dream says, corners of his mouth turning up slightly.

He steps on Dream’s foot again, this time hard enough to dent the leather.

“I’m-” Dream grabs George by the waist and stills him, stepping on the brunet’s shoe (though not hard enough to hurt him) and leaving a dusty footprint. George just laughs, the sound ringing out through the large square. “Stop! These are new shoes!” He shouts, struggling to escape Dream’s grasp.

“You stepped on mine first!” Dream wheezes, easily keeping George in place while he wiggles around like a whiny child.

George slumps in his hands, defeated. “Okay, okay, truce! I call a truce! You’re gonna wake up

everyone if you don't quit-"

Dream grins triumphantly, relaxing his grip. "You're so easy. You do know that it's *literally* impossible that you would beat me, right?"

George scowls pettily, reaching to grab Dream's hands that still rested on his waist. "Yeah, yeah, vampires are over fifty times stronger than the average human, I know."

Dream's eyes widen. "*Fifty times?* There's no way."

George smiles cockily, pulling Dream's hands up between them as their hands splay out against each other. George's hands look tiny in comparison. Dream's fingers are probably an entire inch longer than his. "It's true, studied it myself. With adrenaline, I'm sure it's more than fifty."

"I feel like you know more about me than I do." Dream says, sounding distant.

"Have you never tried using your strength before?" George questions, curious.

Dream closes his hands around George's, practically engulfing them in their size difference. "I mean, I *have*, but..." Dream's voice grows quiet. "Usually I do that when I'm mad. I've never wanted to- to hurt someone that bad. I think I'd die from the guilt if I did."

George smiles at the irony. *He's such a softie. Why God decided that he of all people, should be a vampire is beyond me.* "Well, then what's something you did when you were mad?"

Dream's eyes look directly into his. Pointed, sharp in warning. "You shouldn't know. I don't need you to..." His eyes flick to the street lamp a few feet away, then back to George. "I don't ever want to make you scared. Not again."

George softens. "The reason I'm asking is because I'm *not* scared. I- I know you're not human, Dream. And I don't want you to pretend to be one." As he says the words, he genuinely means them. He knows better than anyone that by pretending something isn't there, it doesn't just go away. George might not be a vampire, but he does know that bottling up feelings is bad.

And no matter how frightening it might be sometimes, he wants Dream to understand that too. Even if the sight of sharp teeth, slit pupils and bloodied clothes is undeniably terrifying, George is determined to understand that it's simply Dream's normal.

Dream exhales, letting his eyes close. "When I was 17, another vampire I was friends with at the time...he told me that he also didn't want to kill humans...I found out later that he'd been killing someone every single night."

George's eyes glisten in realization. "Oh- so that's where all those people went..." An unsteady shiver runs down his spine, remembering years ago when there was a new missing poster for a new person seemingly every morning. That was around the time he'd also told Sapnap about his real reason for having his maps. George swallows. "And...I assume you got mad?"

Dream's eyes open, giving a solemn look downwards. "Really mad." A pause. "I yelled my heart out at him, he called me weak. He said that I was stupid for thinking I could avoid killing people forever. And then...after he left, I punched the ground really hard out of frustration."

Before George makes the connection, Dream makes it for him. "I guess you might've seen it, since you've explored that area a lot. It's...it's the big ravine on the northeast side of the woods. I don't remember it hurting, when I punched the ground like that. I just remember how fast the ground cracked- I was lucky I didn't fall in."

"That...is a lot, yeah." George suffices, barely registering the fact that the same hands, the same ones that created a mile deep ravine in the earth, were holding his so, so gently. How is he even meant to connect the two ideas to the same person?

"You helped me a lot, you know." Dream says fondly, meeting his eyes. "I used to have a really hard time controlling myself...definitely had anger issues."

The flash of blood flickers in George's memory, the remembrance of gritted, sharp teeth and ruthless clawing. Fighting, all for him. He smiles. "Had?"

Almost reading his mind, Dream squints. "Okay, that doesn't count. You were in danger."

Tracing lines down Dream's arms with his fingers, George reaches up to cradle Dream's face in his hands. Dream shuts his eyes with a mix of focus and contentment. George frowns. "Don't you feel like you're forcing yourself to be someone you're not around me? I mean...it's only natural for you

to be, like, aggressive, right?”

“I guess,” Dream mumbles, eyes remaining closed. “I don’t care enough to be bothered by that, I guess. You’re more important than all that.”

George grins, even though Dream can’t see it. “*Wow*, I’m so special.” He teases.

Dream opens his eyes, surprising George with his earnestness when he feels hands rest on his own face to delicately tilt his chin upwards.

“*You are.*” Dream whispers, so, so genuinely that it hurts.

The lightheartedness melts away. It’s quickly replaced by something better.

Dream’s eyes shadowed from being half-lidded, the unevenness of his freckles (there’s more on the right side of his face, George counted to be sure), his high cheekbones, and his jawline not sharp, but rather curved to his chin, giving way to his pale, slightly chapped lips with a rosy undertone that George wants to bring out, maybe by kissing and biting at them, maybe then he would see more of their hidden color.

Such thoughts would usually bring him deep shame for so much as even allowing himself to consider it, but George has accepted it at this point.

He needs Dream to understand just how much love he deserves. How much he was robbed of, how much he can give, and see how much Dream can handle. How much he *himself* could handle.

George’s brows draw together as he whispers. “Can I *please* kiss you?”

The words escape, no longer clinging to his tongue and mind.

Dream’s body stiffens as George notices, with pride, how Dream’s cheeks tint darker in the moonlight. George reassures him by playing with the hair behind Dream’s ears, rubbing his fingernails gently along his scalp.

Dream sighs, melancholically leaning into George's touch. "I...I want to. I really, *really* want to, George. I promise."

George can sense Dream's answer from his tone.

"Still need time, darling?" The name slips out of his mouth without a second thought, caught up in the emotions, the unfiltered need to show Dream that this is real, and that he doesn't have to pretend around him, that he wants him *because* of all of it- the change, the danger, the softness, the authenticity of *him being him*.

Dream makes an indescribable noise, ducking his head down as if he could keep George from seeing his quickly reddening face.

George smiles at that, continuing to weave his thin fingers through Dream's wavy hair. "It's okay."

George thinks they both *have* to see it. Feeling the licking flames at both hearts, strings tugging one or another way. The way they simply aren't complete without one another.

It's nights like these that really make them realize there's something special here. A thriving flower, just cracking through the seed, ready to blossom into something more. Something beautiful.

In that moment he knows they'll make it work. *We have to. This opportunity will never come again.*

Just when he's beginning to doubt it, he looks into Dream's eyes and sees it too.

Love.

Chapter End Notes

we made a discord server for this fic lol come hang
<https://discord.gg/MuAhTqcAep>

Moonlit Devotion

Chapter Summary

THIS ONE IS SO GOOD its probably my favorite just saying
by the way, we made a discord server and I love it so much!! you should join its so fun
:) <https://discord.gg/FxCTxAfFJe>

Warnings for chapter 14: language, discussion of death and other dark concepts, mention of throwing up (VERY BRIEF), and special warning: there is some heated stuff in this chapter! it's NOT smut but if it makes you uncomfortable you can skip it. it'll be marked by asterisks (*) at the start and end of it! i will summarize what happened at the end with some chapter notes in case u skip.

enjoy :D

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Dream is taking George to do something that he thought the human might never do again.

They're walking in the forest past midnight.

The only reason he is doing so is because of the superpowered idiot holding his hand as they walk past each overgrown tree.

It took some convincing for sure, especially going through a part of the woods that's so deep, reminding them of their fight. An experience that neither of them are exactly thrilled to revisit.

Suddenly, George squeals behind him. Dream whips around in less than a second.

“George?!”

“Fuck!” George is on the ground, foot stuck between two large tree roots. “Ugh, that scared me!”

Dream sighs with relief. “Jesus, okay, okay, you're fine. You're so *loud*.” He shuffles over to where George is stuck.

“Sorry,” George laughs a little. “Lemme get out of this dumb thing.” He pulls his foot upwards, but to no avail. He grunts. “Okay...” He tries angling his foot to each side, downwards, and every possible way. Each time he pulls, nothing happens. It’s not going anywhere.

“George?”

“I got it, I got it! Just-” He grabs his ankle and yanks backwards, with no effect. He groans and plants his hands on the ground with a frustrated expression. It’s pretty adorable.

“Here, lemme help.” Dream chuckles and crouches down to place his hands on the sturdy roots.

“Sure, knock yourself out.” George grumbles.

Crack.

Both of the roots are snapped in half, clean.

George’s eyes widened. “Wha-”

“Here,” Dream smiles down at him and holds out a hand, George chokes out a laugh, and takes it. Despite having just broken tree roots with his bare hands, Dream’s hold is so careful and delicate.

George stares at his hands for a moment. *He could break me in half if he wanted.*

“George?”

“Hm?” George snaps his head up to look at Dream.

“You good? Was it- was it too much? I’m sorry, I-I know I shouldn’t do things like that in front of you.” Dream pulls his hands away and leans back.

“Huh? Oh- no! No...” George waves his hands in front of himself. “You’re fine! You’re fine, I just...” George feels his face get hot as he looks at his shoes. “I just forget you can... *do* stuff, sometimes.”

Dream’s eyebrows raise. “Oh.” A breeze rustles the fallen leaves at their feet. “Is that...a bad thing?”

“No!” George’s answer is immediate. “Um, no. It’s...” George can’t escape the bashful smile on his face. “It’s kinda cool, actually.”

Dream looks at him with interest. “Cool?”

“I mean, yeah.” George crosses his arms close to his chest. “When I’m not in danger from that stuff, I guess it’s kind of...” *Hot*. “...cool.”

Dream’s face grows red. He grins. “Cool.”

Walking in the forest was getting easier for them, night after night.

George watches Dream effortlessly maneuver through the branches and climb up into the treehouse, disappearing behind the mossy wooden plank walls.

“I’m still here, you know.” He calls lightheartedly, though still feeling a pit of dread in his chest from fear of being found by another vampire this late at night.

“One second,” Dream calls. He pokes his head out and sees George on the ground below, expression suddenly turning to a smirk. “Can’t climb?” He asks.

“No.” George deadpans.

Dream climbs down a couple branches and offers his hand out for George to grab.

“My arm is gonna come off if you pull me like that!”

“It won’t, trust me.” Dream says, tone soothing. George hesitantly reaches up and grabs his hand, allowing Dream to pull him up into the treehouse and set him down beside himself.

George laughs in disbelief, looking at him while feeling Dream’s grip on his hand loosen, but not let go yet. “That is still so weird.”

“How so?” Dream says, finally letting go of his hand. George notices how there was no hesitation when they touched this time, and smiles.

“You look so human sometimes, I just forget.” George admits, standing up and looking around the cozy treehouse. It actually looked rather nice, an unlit lantern hanging on the ceiling, what looks to be a desk with papers and pens sprawled across it in the corner, and a single open space in the wall that he supposes is meant to be a window, but is covered by a leafy curtain that’s strung together with vines. *To keep out the light during the day.* George realizes, impressed with Dream’s craftsmanship.

Seeing that the room is dark, he digs a lighter out of his shirt pocket to light the lantern in the corner and flicks it open, revealing a tiny flame that illuminates the bottom half of his face in an orange glow.

Dream’s eyes widen suddenly as George reaches up to the lantern. “Hey, why do you- that’s-”

When George lights the lantern and closes its glass door again, Dream visibly relaxes. George rolls his eyes. “Do you seriously think that I’d try to burn your house down?”

“Well, I dunno.” Dream jokes halfheartedly, pulling the curtain of greenery to the side to look down onto the forest floor. “I just know that usually I’m in danger when I see fire. What’re you carrying that around for, anyways?”

“Because,” George walks over to Dream and sits on the ground beside him, slipping his hand into Dream’s easily and his heart warming when Dream doesn’t even hesitate before holding his hand tighter. “Not all vampires are softies like you.”

Dream scoffs, and mumbles, "I'm not soft."

When George doesn't respond to him, he looks over and sees George smirking, and he looks back at their interlocked hands. "Yeah?"

Dream wrinkles his nose. "It was *your* decision to hold *my* hand. I'm just not leaving you hanging so you don't look like a loser." He retaliates.

"Mhm." George hums, quirking a brow.

"Okay, whatever." Dream chuckles, pulling his hand away and turning to walk to his desk. "You're being dumb again."

"I'm super smart, actually." George shuffles over to where Dream is sitting by the desk, and reaches mindlessly to the papers on the desk that look to have lots of writing on them and holds one up to his face. "Wait, where did you get all this paper?"

Abruptly, the paper is ripped out of his grasp and Dream scrambles to put all the pages into a messy pile on the far end of the desk. "Don't look at those!"

George raises his hands defensively, laughing lightly at Dream's urgency. "Okay, God, calm down. Was just asking." He lowers his hands, and watches with interest as Dream focuses on re-organizing the pages with a concerned pout. "What are those anyway?"

"Nothing." Dream mumbles, setting the papers down in a neat stack. "Just...writing stuff."

"Writing?" George perks up, seeing Dream's face tint a light pink under the lantern light. "You mean, you write books?"

"Not really." Dream says quietly, fidgeting with the corners of the top page on the stack. "Just...stories. About things I see or things I think of. Nothing special. I get bored."

"I'm sure." George muses, "I'd love to read them sometime." He says genuinely.

“Maybe someday.” Dream says, setting them down at the edge of the table. He turns to George, both their faces illuminated by the lamp’s dim light. Dream smiles.

“Someday.”

“You’re sure you’re comfortable with this?” Dream worries, sitting down hesitantly onto George’s bed. “I can just keep sleeping on the couch, i-it’s really no trouble.”

George sighs, exasperated as he pulls his sheets up to his chin. “Yes, Dream, I’m sure. I already told you we don’t have to cuddle, too. And you’ve gotten so much better with being close to me already, I’m not worried.”

“Uh...alright.” Dream bites his lip anxiously, awkwardly settling into George’s bed and definitely taking way too long to get comfortable.

After a few seconds of silence, George whacks his arm.

“Hey! What was that for?” Dream grumbles, rubbing the place where George had hit him, even though it didn’t hurt at all.

“You can breathe, you know.” George chuckles. “Stop being so stiff and quiet, it’s freaking me out.”

“Okay. Sorry.” Dream mumbles.

He does his best to even out his breathing, taking steady breaths into his lungs. He and George are both staring at the ceiling, eyes trained at the strips of dim light coming from the outside. Their hearts beat steadily, in sync, unbothered by the obvious tension in the air.

Just when Dream thinks George might be asleep, he whispers. “It’s okay.”

There's something more to it. *I just want you to be comfortable with me, that's all I want.*

Dream's hand remains at his side, as well as George's.

Inching over slowly, he moves his hand gently to rest on top of George's upturned palm. He locks their fingers together.

George reciprocates his gesture with a gentle and comforting squeeze. Neither make a move to do anything more or speak about it.

It's not like they haven't held hands before, but in this setting and context it feels more intimate. It means something more than only wanting to be touching, their hands wrapped around each other like this.

Dream relaxes, body going slack. He sighs gently, the air escaping his lips and into the room, like an admission to his desire for George's touch.

We're okay.

"Come on," Dream says, unbuttoning his shirt. "It'll be fun."

George rolls his eyes. "I don't know how to swim. I've literally never swam in my life."

"You get used to it quickly," Dream explains, shrugging the collared shirt off and tossing it on a rock. "I swim a lot since I kinda live out here. I- Oh! I can teach you!" He grins.

"But it's so dark." George whines, staring at the water's moonlit surface, shivering at the thought of dipping his toes into it. "I'm gonna drown and die and then the fish are gonna eat me."

“It’s fine, I won’t let you drown.” Dream chuckles, “Promise. We’ll go home right after.”

Dream steps out of his jeans, leaving him in his undergarments.

He sees George considering a swim, eyebrows furrowed. His pink tinted face is hard to see in the dark, but undeniable nonetheless. George sighs softly. “I mean, okay.”

Dream’s already lowering himself into the water by the time George decides to start pulling off his shirt, tugging it over his head. It messes up his hair. Dream can’t help but watch shamelessly.

George frowns at him when he notices. “Stop that.”

“Stop what?” Dream asks, a small smile growing on his face.

“Stop staring at me like you’re gonna *eat* me.” George scoffs, moving behind a tree to unbutton his jeans.

“I’m *not*, you idiot.” Dream turns, swimming further from the edge of the lake. He hears the water ripple behind him and turns when George is waist-deep in the water. His face is red, forearms dipped below the water’s surface.

“It’s cold.” He complains.

“You’ll get used to it.” Dream averts his gaze to look at his face, brushing him off. He waves him over with his arms. “Come on, swim to me.”

“I *don’t know how to swim*, you nut.” George frowns, but Dream knows he’s fighting a smile.

Dream swims towards him and stands, shallow water making him come out to be a lot taller. He offers a hand, which George takes almost immediately.

He pulls George towards him, resting his other hand on George’s hip, and swims back into the deeper section of water. George swallows, adam’s apple bobbing.

“Don’t let go.” He says, voice wavering a little.

“I won’t, we’re just treading for now.” Dream says gently.

Their faces are close, like this. It allows Dream to rake his eyes over all of George’s features, tracing his face. His skin is a pearly white and blue, moonlight reflecting off the water and into his face. His hair is mostly dry, just the edges dripping with water. His face is flushed, red from the cold or closeness, Dream isn’t sure. He notices how there are these light, perfect freckles, few and far but noticeable from this close. They’re perfectly placed along the bridge of his nose. His gaze meets George’s doe eyes, long and wet lashes decorating the edges.

He can’t stop staring.

“Again,” George breaks the silence. “What are you looking at?” His breath is soft against Dream’s face.

“Nothing.” Dream mumbles. “M’just concentrating on keeping your fatass afloat.”

That earns a giddy giggle from George, the smaller leaning into his neck and resting his head on Dream’s shoulder. “Whatever. I still feel like I’m gonna drown and die.”

“Why?”

“Don’t trust you.”

Knowing that’s an obvious bluff, Dream chuckles. “Come on, now. I haven’t let you go yet.”

“Yeah, you like me too much to let the fishes eat me.”

Dream laughs and starts to let his grip slip, letting go of George’s hand. The brunet immediately starts to sink. “Dream-!”

He locks his legs around Dream’s waist and rests them on the small of the taller’s back, wrapping his arms around his neck. “D-Don’t do that!”

Dream laughs, shaking his head. “Nothing was going to happen! You’re so dumb.” He says. His voice is sickeningly fond, George shakes his head. “Don’t do that. You’re supposed to teach me.”

“I’m tired,” Dream shrugs. “I’ll teach you next time.”

George silences. He keeps his legs locked around Dream’s hips, but lets his arms trail down to Dream’s shoulders.

The quiet sound of running water and distant crickets draws Dream’s mind away. He closes his eyes, keeping his legs moving so they stay above the water’s surface.

“Do you want to get out?” Dream asks, genuinely.

“No.” George mumbles.

“You were just complaining about it. The fish *will* eat us eventually.” He jokes, skin tingling under George’s touch to his bicep.

“Let them eat us.” George says quietly.

“But you-”

“Shh.” George raises a finger to Dream’s lips. “Just a few minutes.”

Dream closes his mouth. George lowers his hand and curls both arms around Dream’s neck, leaning against his chest. Their conversation fades again, leaving him to think again.

With their chests flush together like this, Dream can feel George’s heart thudding in his chest. The gentle beat is comforting, he thinks maybe they’re in sync. George’s breath is soft against his skin. The human closes his eyes.

Dream’s hands are steady against George’s waist, tracing up to his ribs. A year ago, he never would’ve thought something like this would ever be possible. He’s proud of himself for being able to control the urge, knowing George can be safe in his arms now. It makes his heart swell with pride and adoration.

A few minutes pass, with only the sound of running water to fill the silent sound of their deep thoughts. Dream starts swimming back to the water's edge, taking a seat on an underwater rock to rest his legs.

"Tired already?" George mumbles, attempting to maintain his cocky attitude through his haze.

"We should get out." Dream says, ignoring him. "Don't want to get your skin all prune-y. You can shower when I take you home."

George nods, and Dream steps out of the water, carrying George on his hips. He smiles to himself, noticing how instead of trying to detach himself, George holds onto him tighter.

He thinks that normally, George wouldn't want to be held like this. And he wouldn't want to hold George like this either, in fear of hurting him or making him uncomfortable.

But when he's holding the other like this, his hands supporting George's weight against his chest, legs wrapped around his hips, faces so close he could kiss George's pretty pink lips, he thinks he might've fallen in love all over again.

He scoops up their clothes and throws them over his shoulder, carrying George home. He just hopes no one will spot them on the way.

"You wanna know something cool?" Dream asks quietly.

"What?" George asks just as quiet, following Dream's gaze towards the dark sky, littered with opaque clouds and sprinkled in white stars.

Dream steps closer to George, easily putting an arm around his shoulders and keeping his gaze fixed on the sky. "I used to count the stars every night, and I realized that sometimes, the number of them changes." He explains. "I think sometimes stars can like...die or something. But when the number goes up, I guess that means there was a new one made."

He feels George slip a hand around his back to hold his waist, and he suddenly becomes very aware of how close they are. And, to his happiness, he realizes it feels like second nature. Even noticing how their skin touches where the crook of his elbow meets the nape of George's neck, he doesn't feel tempted like he used to. *I've gotten so much better. This is possible. We can do this. We can actually be together.*

"You counted *every single one*?" George asks, in disbelief.

"It kept me distracted," Dream explains. "...a lot like writing did. I hated thinking about how hungry I was all the time, I hated hunting when I was younger, honestly."

A beat of silence, and Dream feels a warmth bloom in his chest as George slightly adjusts his fingers on his side, barely able to feel the action through the layer of clothing. "Are you ever *not* hungry?" George asks, sounding a tad nervous.

Dream bites the inside of his cheek. "Do you want an honest answer?"

"I wouldn't ask if I wanted you to lie, idiot." George huffs, and from his tone of voice, Dream can tell he's smiling.

"Okay, then, no. I've tried, but I guess it's sort of part of being a vampire." Dream says. "I can satisfy my hunger enough to get by for a bit, but I'll always have the urge there, just in the back of my head, if that makes sense." The end of his sentence turns to nervous mumbles, feeling conscious of how it must sound to George to know that he would always be hungry, even around him.

"I mean, the more blood I drink, the longer it lasts for me," He continues to explain, hoping it will make it sound better. "The most I've had at once is when I...you know." He makes a vague gesture with his hand, looking down at George and seeing him nod, understanding that he meant Techno. "And I haven't eaten at all since then, and what's it been? Two weeks?"

"Two weeks." George affirms, sounding interested. "I didn't know that, actually. Vampires always tended to attack just whenever they felt like it, at least from the patterns I noticed. I don't think any of them had the self control not to."

"I get it, actually." Dream sympathizes. "It's kinda hard to explain, but...when I turned, instincts just became a part of me. Nothing you do can make them stop, even if you get better at controlling

them. I...tried really hard, at first, to make them just go-”

Dream stops abruptly as he smells a faint scent.

Under the thickness of the smell of George’s blood, there’s...another human? And from how strong it is, they’re right behind them.

“Drea-”

Dream disconnects his arm from around George in an instant, and whips around and tackles the following human to the ground.

The human lets out a startled yell, and then says in a familiar, deep voice, “Fuck, dude! It’s just me! Get off!”

Oh. Dream can see his face clearly with his night-enhanced vision. *It’s Sapnap.*

“*Sapnap?* What the hell are you doing out here?” Dream asks, standing up and offering the noiret a hand.

Startled face relaxing slightly, he takes Dream’s hand to pull himself up and sends a stern glare towards George, who was holding himself with an embarrassed and shocked expression. “Because this *idiot* has been leaving his house for the past, I dunno, *two weeks* every single night and never tells me why!”

“So you followed me?” George asks, dismayed.

“Yeah, I’m just...” Sapnap finishes brushing himself off, and Dream catches him sending a wary glance his way before looking back at George. “I was worried about you. You never go out at night, you always say that it’s too dangerous.”

Dream glares down at Sapnap, taking a protective step towards George and putting an arm around his waist protectively. “He can do what he wants.” Dream growls.

Sapnap's eyes widen, mouth opening in confusion and looking at George with a bewildered expression.

George giggles, placing a hand on Dream's chest, but Dream refuses to stop staring at Sapnap. "It's okay, Dream." George smiles innocently. "Sap's just worried about me."

Dream hums skeptically, watching Sapnap lean back a little as Dream continues to stare him down. "If you say so." He mumbles, allowing his grip on George to slip and give him space again.

"Thanks Dreamie." George says, too smug to be genuine, but makes Dream's heart race nonetheless. Nimble fingers brush some hair out of his face before pulling back.

Sapnap gawks in disbelief. "I think I'm gonna throw up."

George laughs at that, but his laughter dies out when Sapnap walks up to him and grabs his arm gently. "Can I talk to you for a second?" Sapnap glances behind him at Dream briefly before looking back at him. "Privately." He mumbles.

George looks at Dream and puts a hand on his bicep. "I'll only be a second, okay?" He smiles. "Be right back."

"Uh...alright." Dream says, watching Sapnap lead him away with a longing look.

Sapnap pulls him a good fifteen feet away before he stops and pulls George behind a tree, out of Dream's sight. He can still hear their voices, faint but clear enough to distinguish their voices. *At least this is one good thing my stupid powers can do for me.* Dream thinks. *Sapnap doesn't know how far away I can hear things from.*

"What is going on with you?" He hears Sapnap ask, voice filled with concern. "I-I don't understand how you could have made up after such a major fight so quickly."

Did George tell Sapnap about that? Does he know I'm a vampire? Dream swallows harshly.

“We just...made up.” George reasons helplessly. “We talked about it and stuff and I forgive him.”

He’s...lying? Sapnap doesn’t know about me, then.

“I don’t want him to hurt you again.” Sapnap says gently. “You got really upset...I don’t think that...” He trails off, and George frowns, seeing the genuine concern in his eyes.

“He won’t, he’s changed for the better, really.” George reassures. “You know me, I don’t normally talk to other people if I think they’re bad news.”

“You said you didn’t think you guys could make it work.” Sapnap says. “I just don’t understand what’s changed.”

George sighs. “We just talked things out, okay? I don’t know what else to tell you. And I’m...happy.” Dream can hear the smile in his voice. “I actually think he’s really good for me. I promise, okay?”

Dream’s heart sings. *I’m good for George. He thinks I’m good for him.*

Sapnap hums, voice coming out weary. “If...if you say so, George. I really do just want you to be happy, so if you’re happy, then...I guess I’ll trust your judgement. Even if Dream is the scariest guy I’ve ever met.”

Dream frowns. *That hurts.*

George sighs softly. “Thank you, Sap.” He says, relieved. “He’s a little intense, but you just need to get to know him better. You guys have hung out some, he’s fun, remember?”

“Yeah...I guess so.” Sapnap manages a smile.

They walk back to where Dream’s standing, who turns to lean against the tree he was standing behind.

When they make it close enough he comments. “What is *that* supposed to mean?” Dream asks

accusingly.

“Huh?” Sarnap looks up slightly to compensate for Dream’s height.

“*The scariest guy you’ve ever met .*” Dream mocks.

George’s face pales.

Sarnap sputters. “H-How did you hear that? We were like twenty feet away!” He says, in disbelief.

Oops.

“You weren’t *that* far.” Dream reasons, hoping to cover the mistake. He briefly looks over to George, who was giving him a death glare. “It- uh- The wind carried your voices.” Or something like that.”

Dream can practically hear George calling him a dumbass.

“Wh- Okay. I-Whatever.” Sarnap rolls his eyes. “What are you guys doing out here *right now* anyway?”

“Nightly walk.” George spits out, hoping it sounds natural.

“Date night.” Dream says at the same time.

Fuck.

George looks at him wide-eyed before coming up with some tangible way to excuse their divergent answers.

“I...wasn’t going to tell him that. You’re so sappy.” George smiles a little too hard.

“You just act like you aren’t in love with me.” Dream jokes.

“I hate you.” George says flatly.

I bet you do right now. Dream smiles smugly. *It’s so funny to watch you run in circles to avoid saying we’re more than friends.*

“Uh huh.” Dream says.

Sapnap just rolls his eyes. “Jesus, okay, at least tell me if you’re gonna keep leaving in the middle of the night. I would’ve thought Dream was trying to kill you or something.” Sapnap chuckles.

“Hah, yeah.” George laughs shortly, making brief eye contact with Dream that seemed to say *‘that’s awkward’*.

“Anyway. Sorry for following you, George. You know I was just worried about you.”

“It’s okay,” George relaxes. “Thank you Sapnap.”

He pulls George into a quick but tight hug, then turns to Dream and offers a hand for him to grab. “Don’t hurt my Gogy, alright?”

Dream chuckles. “I won’t, promise.”

He grabs Sapnap’s hand and claps him on the back before Sapnap turns away. “Go home soon, the vampires might be out at this time.” He calls out. “*Date night* or whatever can wait.”

George waves him goodbye and makes sure he’s far out of sight before finally turning to face Dream, exhaling loudly. “What the hell.”

“Okay, listen,” Dream groans. “I just didn’t think about it.”

“You *have* to be more careful.” George scolds, clenching the bridge of his nose. “You’re gonna be hunted down by the whole village if you talk like that to every person you see. You’re lucky it was just Sapnap.”

“I know, I know.” Dream sighs. “I’ll do better.”

“Thank you.” George says walking to the edge of a small hill, and Dream follows.

“You didn’t tell him I’m a vampire, right?” Dream asks, to confirm.

“No, no.” George shakes his head. “I-I just told him we fought really bad. He comforted me then.”

Dream hums. “He’s a good friend. I’m sorry that you...that I made you that upset.”

George waves a hand dismissively, and smiles, “In the past. We were both kinda dumb, then.”

Dream smiles, too. “Yeah. I suppose we were.”

Silence is thick in the air, save for the gentle sound of rustling leaves and distant crickets. But the air feels fresh, flowing in and out of their lungs easily, coaxing the words from their mouth.

“How long are you going to keep it from him?”

George seems to think, for a moment. “I’m not sure. I think he’d be accepting, he always has been.” George takes a seat on the hill, it startles a few fireflies as he pats for Dream to sit next to him. “I’m more worried about his own mental state. I’ve already put him through enough by just being me.”

“Being you,” Dream sits. “...is exactly what I think makes you special, George.”

George scoffs. “Don’t patronize me.”

“But it’s true. You’re so broken, yet you constantly try to fix everything but yourself.” A group of grasshoppers erupt in jumps out from swaying strands of grass. “How could anyone live like that? So selfless to the point it hurts you.”

George tilts his head away. *Broken*. His voice drops to a sorrowful mutter. "I'm not selfless, Dream. Not even close."

"But you are," Dream places a hand on George's knee. The touch of a gentle giant. "You taught me to think about people other than myself- to *care* about people other than myself." His thumb dares to trail back and forth over George's skin. "I never could've done that on my own."

George's eyes meet his. It's a look he hadn't seen in a long, long time. It's one of fondness, of unguarded sweetness. "You really think so?"

Dream missed that look so much. He'd ached for it, he'd dreamed of seeing that kind of trust return to George's doe eyes. He was worried he might not have ever seen it again, and it would simply live as a memory. But now that it was here, waiting to be carefully handled and watered back to life, it filled Dream's soul with a sweet, honey-like hope that he refused to let seep through the cracks of his mistakes.

His voice was delicate over the soft rumble that was always evident when he spoke. "I believe it more than anything."

George laughs lightly and pulls his knees to his chest. Dream does the same. "Who am I to deserve to be so valued by someone like you?"

Dream frowns a little. "What do you mean?"

"You're just-" George rubs his fingers back and forth over his knees as he thinks. "You're so- so *perfect*, I- well, no. Not perfect. You tried to kill me." He jokes.

Dream winces. He will never not feel the need to apologize. "I'm sorry."

"Don't be. I think that..." George's voice grows quieter. "I think that's part of what makes you so perfect. The fact that you change. That you changed for *me*, of all people." George turns to face him. His gentle smile accompanied by his words makes Dream's heart explode. "Maybe neither of us deserved that." He breathes.

He's right. Dream realizes. We were both lost causes that somehow found a second chance in each other.

"I know *I* didn't." Dream's face darkens. "I was such a mess. I didn't even realize it, either. But you were so...so *real*. I wanted to hate you that night we met, I already thought I did, but I couldn't help it."

George tilts his head attentively. "Couldn't help what?"

"Wanting you," Dream finishes with a whisper. He swallows. Summer dew falls from grass blades as he sweeps his hand over them. "All of you."

George is quiet for a few seconds.

Maybe that was too much. I know he doesn't really like deep conversations like this. Maybe I should've just stayed quiet. He turns to face George, who was simply staring at the open field with a faint smile.

"All of me." George whispers. Dream glances over at him again, and watches the faint smile grow into a full ear-to-ear grin.

George is so easy to find beautiful. The last fraction of orange light left from the sunset rests across his skin, warming it in an ethereal glow that hides the pink on his cheeks. His eyes, usually dark, are highlighted in warmth and glimmering colors from the sunlight and the lantern above them hanging from Dream's treehouse. With that smile on his face, that Dream could truly, *genuinely* claim is because of him, and the incredible delicate yet strong look of his hands on his knees, Dream thinks that George might just be an angel.

George looks over at him, the smile still on his face. "I think I have a sense now for when you're staring at me."

Dream hums a laugh, mostly coming from his chest. He doesn't look away, and instead leans closer. He reaches to hold George's face with the most gentle touch, slowly cupping the soft cheek in his hand. George leans into it, their eyes still locked with a fondness Dream had never seen him have before. Something *he* made him do. That's when he's overcome with what he realizes how he feels about George.

He wants George to be all his, and only his. Wants to see him smile because of him, make him breakfast in the morning, be taught how to be human again by him, learn everything about every moment of George's life. Dream wants to know *everything* about him, no matter what it takes.

Is that what love is?

Dream thinks that there's no other way to explain it.

"You're still staring, Dream." George whispers shyly, averting his gaze. Dream blinks back into focus, and can't stop his other hand from reaching to hold George's face, so that he has no choice but to make direct eye contact.

"I know." Dream affirms softly. Fireflies sparkle behind George, only making him look more like an ethereal being. Dream thinks that George might be the most beautiful person to ever exist. He can't stop looking at him, thinking about how lucky he is to see someone so special, and in such a vulnerable way.

He can't stop the next words that leave his mouth in a mumbled whisper. "I love you."

George's lips part, and eyes widen at the words. Dream immediately backtracks. "I-I'm sorry, I just..." He rubs his thumbs over George's face assuringly. "I was thinking about how wonderful you are. A-And... I just couldn't help myself."

*

George's eyes get the slightest bit glossy, and he breathes a hushed sigh before leaning closer to reply by grabbing Dream's freckled face in his gentle hands and finally locking their lips together with a soft, yet hungry kiss.

Dream's face grows hot in an instant, not kissing back for a couple of moments from pure shock.

His mind becomes a rapid cycle of '*kiss kiss George is kissing me I'm gonna explode kiss this is scary kiss him kiss me more control yourself please kiss me more*'.

The taste. The surge of muddled instincts, emotions, all turning into an avalanche. It's so much at once, Dream can hardly be in the present moment.

Just as George begins to back away, Dream holds his face tighter and brings their lips together again, more desperate this time. George sighs through his nose, immediately kissing back and leaning into his touch. Dream hums a satisfied noise as George's deft fingers push through his hair, tugging gently on blond waves, and tilting his head to kiss Dream even deeper.

Dream thinks he could just die right now. The soft lips on his, pressing over and over again now in a slow and steady rhythm, is so intoxicating. It feels so right, like this is where he was meant to be his entire life. George is everything, George is perfect, George is *his*.

George's lips also taste really good, unexpectedly so. That's probably just his instincts thinking about George's blood, and how good it would taste to just sink his teeth into his neck with no remorse. The thought alone makes his breathing heavier, in both anxiety and desire.

Shaky hands land at his sternum, gently pushing back and disconnecting their lips for just a moment. "Dre-" Dream kisses him again, deeper than before, and not realizing that he's been lightly pulling on George's bottom lip with his teeth. George makes a soft whine at reconnecting again, melting into it for a moment before pushing back again with a little more force. "*Dream*, Dream... stop."

Dream pulls back immediately, panic shocking through his veins at the words. "W-What? Are you alright? What did I do?"

"No, no, it's just..." George swallows, and licks his lips before speaking again through light panting. "Your teeth..." He mutters, bringing a finger to his bottom lip where fangs lightly tugged at a moment ago.

"O-Oh..." Dream breathes, regret seeping through his tone. "I'm- I'm so sorry, I- I didn't mean to-"

"No, it's... it's okay." George affirms quickly, a grin spreading across his face. "It's just- I knew they'd be sharp, but... just shocked me a bit. Haven't ever... been so close. To a vampire." George's throat shifts as he swallows. Dream can hear his pulse so loudly, like a drum.

"I-I'm sorry! It's just- *fuck I can't help it.*" Dream whines, resting his head on George's shoulder.

“You just smell so *fucking good*, it’s not fair.”

George smiles sympathetically. “Hey,” He softly assures, carding a hand through the dirty blond hair in a soothing manner. Dream’s shoulders relax in response. “It’s okay. I trust you.”

Dream lifts his head to look at George again with hopeful eyes. “...You do?”

“Of course,” George smiles, God, his smile is like if all the angels in heaven suddenly gave him a hundred miracles at the same time.

But then it turns to a smirk.

George leans close to Dream’s ear. “I bet you couldn’t scare me if you tried, now.”

Dream blanks. “What?”

He hears a light giggle by his left ear, shivering at the breath on his skin. “What do you wanna do, Dream?” He continues, trailing a hand up the vampire’s arm. “You wanna kiss me again? Maybe... hold me down? I have a feeling you’d like that.”

Dream feels like his face is literally melting. No words can come out of his mouth at the moment, but it doesn’t stop him from trying. “Uh...”

“And when you pushed me against that wall... didn’t you want to kiss me then, too?” George is relentless. “Maybe you should stop holding yourself back, Clay.”

Clay.

The name sends a shiver throughout his whole body. Accompanied by words so affectionate, so daring, Dream’s head spirals. It’s a reminder, George *knows* him. He knows everything about him, who he is, but also who he used to be. And saying his name like that...

It was an acceptance of all of it.

And it set something off inside of him that couldn't be undone.

"George," Dream breathes, it hardly makes a noise. "George, I- you can't say that."

"I can." George laughs slyly. "And I mean it."

"No, I-I'm *serious*." Dream nearly growls. "I won't be able to stop myself." Dream isn't sure what he means by that, whether it's stopping himself from biting George or kissing him so much that he can't breathe. He's terrified of both of them pretty much equally.

When George leans back to make eye contact again, there's a fire in them he had never seen before. A look fueled by confidence and wanting .

"*Then don't.*" He whispers.

He connects their lips again, and Dream was pretty sure that the sun wouldn't be able to burn his face as hot as it is right now. He kisses back on instinct, his hands cautiously resting on the human's small chest. He keeps his mouth mostly closed in fear of his fangs peeking out again, and though it makes the kiss a bit more awkward, it doesn't seem to bother George. If anything, it's probably adding fuel to the little power trip that he's currently on.

As George sits up on his knees to teasingly lean over Dream, deepening their kiss with his new leverage, Dream feels every urge he's had from day one of meeting George crash in all at once.

He's serious. He wants me to be myself. He actually wants me to stop holding back.

He's not scared anymore.

The thought sends exhilarating shivers through Dream's body. All the worries about hurting George, all the times Dream thought that if he showed too much of who he really was, George would run away and never talk to him again - it all melts away.

George isn't going anywhere. And Dream wants to keep it that way.

George's hands settle at Dream's shoulders as he tentatively pulls back, their noses brushing. "I can feel your pulse getting faster." George comments.

"Can't help it," Dream murmurs again, for probably the millionth time since he's met George. "You're gonna make me do something bad if you keep this up."

"Something *bad*, huh?" George giggles, pressing a gentle kiss to the tip of Dream's freckled nose. Dream scrunches his face up in response. George smiles fondly at it. "If you mean biting me, I- I think I could handle it."

Dream stares, dazed. "What?"

"C'mon, Dream," George drawls, resting a hand on his cheek. "I'm a vampire hunter. I've gotten little bites here and there. Didn't like 'em, but I don't think I'd really... um, mind yours at this point." George's thoughtful expression turns into a slightly more panicked one, but still reserved. "Not that I want you to bite me. Uh- I'd rather keep most of my blood, thanks." He laughs nervously.

"Are you serious?" Dream looks in wonder into George's eyes. *He's really that comfortable with me now? To the point where if I bit him, he'd forgive me?*

Dream swallows. *There's so much I can do, now.*

"I'm dead serious." George affirms, a reassuring thumb brushing over his cheek.

Dream sighs, hands shaking slightly with reserved eagerness, and smiles. "And I assume making you a vampire isn't an option?" He asks, half joking.

George rolls his eyes. "I still don't like vampires. You're just the exception, don't get ahead of yourself."

"But I wouldn't be tempted at least...? When we're close..." Dream suggests lightly.

“No,” George says firmly. “I like...*this*. The way we are...it proves that we can work.” Dream’s chest blooms with warmth as George speaks. *He’s right. Despite everything, we’re still here together.* “You are proof that nobody can stop us. And have more faith in yourself, idiot. You’ve gotten so much better at being close to me already. I trust you. Now stop your stupid ‘woe is me’ act and just *kiss me*.”

Everything floods Dream’s head at once. *I’m free. I can kiss him. He wants me to kiss him. He wants me, and not just my human side. He’s asking for it, he’s mine. He’s mine.*

George is mine.

Possessiveness takes hold of Dream’s body as he grabs George by the collar of his button-up shirt and crashes their lips together. George makes a surprised, but pleased hum in reaction to it, fervently kissing back as his hands trail to hold Dream around his neck.

Be careful, his rational voice warns. *He doesn’t know what he’s getting himself into.*

But with George’s tongue lightly pressing to his bottom lip, Dream finds that he’s done listening to that voice.

I’m taking this. Dream thinks. *I don’t care what happens, I’m taking this moment. I’m gonna go insane if I don’t.*

Dream grips George’s shirt even harder, to the point he can hear a strain in the fabric. George doesn’t seem to mind, though, as he smiles triumphantly into their kiss. Something new, unfiltered and possessive claws its way into Dream’s consciousness, similar to the feeling he got when he smelled George’s blood for the first time, but not quite for the same reasons. Instead of pushing it away like he had been doing since the moment they’d met, he welcomes it. In fact, Dream lets it *consume* him.

He grabs George’s arms and yanks them away from around his neck, and forces the brunet to land on his back using inhuman strength, but not enough to actually hurt him. George lets out a startled gasp at the impact, their lips disconnecting as he stares up at the vampire in a daze.

“Wow...” George mutters, eyes half lidded.

Dream smugly smiles down at him, releasing his grip on George's arms, instead taking interest in his clothed chest as his fingers slide up and down it with intrigue. "How's this?" Dream asks, already knowing George's answer.

George huffs, taking in heavy breaths to try and compose words into a response. He smiles weakly, but still with that same snarkiness always present in him. "That all you got? Really?" He giggles innocently.

Dream narrows his eyes, allowing them to dilate into their more intimidating form. George's expression shifts from a smirk to slightly worried in an instant. *Cocky dumbass.*

Dream's hands shove under George's shirt and slide to his back, gripping him firmly and easily pulling him closer and off the ground. George exhales at the hands on his bare skin, cheeks pinkening.

"You're sure you want this?" Dream lowly asks a final time, giving George one last chance to change his mind.

The fragile human in Dream's grasp holds onto his shirt for support, forcing an answer out of his throat. "Yes. Please."

And with that, Dream forgets all sense of control he's been holding onto for his entire life.

Like a rubber band, he snaps.

He pulls George so that his chest is pressed against his own, and hungrily runs his hands up and down his thin torso. The body in his arms arches into the touch, and Dream takes the opportunity to press an open-mouthed kiss under his jaw. George keens at it, trailing a delicate hand into Dream's hair, grounding himself in the shallow strands with a loose grip as he blissfully exhales. *My lips are on his neck. So close to him.* It makes Dream's heart flutter more, and he leaves another kiss to George's Adam's apple, light and gentle. George holds onto him tighter, white-knuckled. *I wanted to bite you here, once. I know part of me still wants to. But I can control it. I can be better for you.*

"You're beautiful." Dream whispers, feeling the skin under his fingers as if it were the most precious thing in the world. Which, it honestly was. "You're so fucking beautiful."

George responds with a breathy giggle, releasing his grip on Dream's hair a little to lean back and make eye contact. "Y-You don't really mean that."

Dream feels challenged by the statement, appalled that George could ever think that he *wasn't* beautiful. He pulls him so that their chests are flush again, supporting the back of his head with a hand with the other still holding up his back and connecting their lips again. It's less heated, and more affectionate. Dream takes his time to pour every ounce of love into it as he can, hoping that George can feel the emotion through it, gently moving their lips in sync at a slow pace. He mindlessly laces his fingers into the brunet hair, rubbing back and forth lovingly.

George's body untenses, and relaxes into the touch and the kiss. The position would be uncomfortable if it wasn't for Dream's strength, his arms easily holding George's body off the ground as he leans over, allowing his body to take control and move on its own rather than holding back. Dream feels absolutely enthralled to feel his emotions and actions become one, finally agreeing that *this* is what he wants. *This* is what he wants, this is what George wants, and he can *finally have it*.

After lingering in the sickly sweet kisses for a moment, he pulls back to see George's face, who's expression was a mix of embarrassed and soft.

"Don't..." Dream breathes in, catching his breath. "Don't you fucking *dare* say things like that."

The shudder George experiences is inexplicably perfect. George breathes, "O-Okay."

Dream lays George back down on the ground slowly, diverging from the aggressive way he'd been holding George off of the ground without a second thought, easy. He responds, "Thank you."

Brushing hair away from his eyes, George says, "Are you okay?" It's careful, loving.

Dream settles himself to straddle George's waist, loving the way George just barely bites his lip at the action. He holds his jittery hands out for the both of them to see and furrows his eyebrows. "I can't tell if I'm just nervous or if my body wants to attack something."

"Maybe it's both," George supplies, grabbing Dream's hand and forcing it to stop shaking, not by physically overpowering him, but with the warm look he gives. "Just like you said." He brings Dream's hand to his mouth, kissing the back of his palm affectionately. Daringness mixes with

desire in a question, “Do you want to consume me?” He purrs.

Dream’s fingernails brush George’s cheek, firing nerves of intrigue in its wake along the pink-blooming skin. “Every part of you.”

Warm and earnest, George hooks a finger on Dream’s shirt collar to bring him closer. “And why don’t you?”

Their foreheads touch. Destructive jade green peering into an inescapable brown. “Because I need you.” Their lips accidentally brush when he speaks.

George inclines his jaw, eyes fluttering closed as he speaks in a soft voice. “Then take me.”

As their lips connect again, Dream furrows his brows in deep concentration, savoring every moment as if it would be the only one he would get. George returns the enthusiasm, pulling him closer by his shirt and sliding to the exposed skin of his neck. Dream can feel the heat radiating from George’s cheeks, and his soul reaches. *More. More. More.* Losing himself in a daze of wanting and selfishness, he nips at George’s bottom lip gently, and is pleased when George’s lips part for him, mouths moving again to connect, again, again, again.

Dream slips his tongue into George’s mouth, which elicits the most perfect whimper as their kiss deepens, George’s fingertips trailing up Dream’s neck, leaving trails of electricity in the wake of his fingernails digging into dirty blond hair. Dream breathes heavy, parting their mouths and sloppily going to kiss at the corner of George’s lips, to his angled jawline, and a slower, more thoughtful kiss just under his ear, letting his tongue flick against it briefly before speaking.

“I can feel your pulse on my tongue,” Dream pants, hot breath brushing over the skin of George’s neck. “So fast...so loud...” He leaves another open-mouthed kiss further down his neck, feeling the human under him begin to breathe faster, the deafening sound of his heartbeat thumping faster, faster, faster every time he does something new, feeling dizzy with the addictive sensation it gives him. He parts from George’s skin, and moves to meet his eyes, hovering their lips centimeters away from each other as he speaks again. “You don’t even know what you do to me, do you?”

George doesn’t speak for a couple moments, hair mussed and eyes dark as he tries to catch his breath. “Fuck...hah, you-” He takes a breath. “You look really...intense right now.”

Dream trails his hands to George’s collarbone, obsessed with the way George’s body looks so

delicate, like a porcelain doll, one that could easily be broken in the wrong hands. Dream leans down again, and presses another kiss to the other side of George's neck, feeling the drumming of the human's pulse engulf his every thought, faintly registering George's quiet mewl as he briefly touches his tongue to the pale skin, and pulls back.

The moment he disconnects, he chases George's lips once more, this time forcefully pushing his tongue in, and George accepts it immediately by parting his lips wider. They kiss deeply, and Dream takes the chance to explore George's mouth with his tongue, wanting to memorize every part of it. George's sounds are muffled by Dream's continued, unrelenting kiss, hardly letting George or himself breathe.

Suddenly, their tongues slide against one another, and George whines *loudly* into his mouth. Dream's lips stretch into a smirk, causing his fangs to brush against George's tongue, just barely avoiding drawing blood and making Dream shudder at how close they are. A single slip of his instincts could mean he would lose control. George writhes slightly under Dream's hands, kissing back fervently, seeming to be overwhelmed in thrill.

Dream parts from George's lips in heaving breaths, opening his eyes to George's reddened face and a hungry look in his eyes. George smiles weakly. "You're so hot." He rasps out.

Dream chuckles lowly at the sound of his strained voice. "I can't believe I thought you'd be scared, I think you're enjoying yourself a bit too much." He lovingly runs a hand through George's hair, and leans down to kiss at the edge of George's ear, then just barely grazes his fangs over it, grinning. George shifts restlessly, shutting his eyes tight as Dream laughs breathily in his ear. "You're so cute."

George hums in a high tone, back arching with a shiver as Dream's fangs pull away again. Dream kisses his temple chastely, grinning possessively. "My human."

George only responds in a breathy giggle, sounding so out of it that it concerns Dream for a moment.

"You doing okay?" Dream asks softly, leaning back some to give him space. "You look a little overwhelmed, George."

"Yeah..." George breathes in response, voice heavy with haze as he struggles to keep his eyes open and maintain eye contact. His eye color was almost covered completely by the darkness. "Yeah just- oh my god." George brings a hand to his face, wiping at his forehead and pushing some hair out of his face. "Oh my *god*." He repeats, smiling dazedly.

“Is that a good thing?” Dream huffs.

“So good.” George whispers. “So, so good.”

Dream smiles, filled with a fond warmth. *He’s never this affectionate. I’ve never seen him so passive before, not trying to argue.*

“Good.” Dream whispers back, climbing off George and pulling him upwards so that George is now sitting on his lap. “That’s good.”

*

He kisses George on the lips again, George smiles languidly as he kisses back. When they separate again, Dream says, “I love you.” George’s eyes light up, and before he can respond, Dream pulls him into another kiss, then parts again to speak against George’s lips. “I love you so much, George.”

He kisses him again, and George starts giggling into his lips, making it difficult for the both of them before Dream parts again. “I want to tell you that all the time.” Dream whispers. “That’s all I ever wanted to say to you. I know that now.”

George exhales shakily, eyes glossed over in affection. “I...I think I love you, too.” He breathes.

Dream presses a kiss to his forehead. “You think?” Dream says sarcastically.

George rolls his eyes halfheartedly, and kisses Dream on the cheek, leaving a cold feeling behind as the air brushes over it after he pulls away. “Don’t push your luck.” George smirks. “Besides, Sapnap might still be following us around.”

Dream scrunches his nose. “What the fuck? That’s so weird!” He laughs, leaning his head over George’s shoulder and relishing in the closeness. “You ruined the mood. You stupid idiot.” He says, with all the love in the world.

George perks up suddenly. “Look! I see him!” He points.

Dream whips around in an instant. “*What?*”

“Hah, you’re dumb.” George says. “There’s no one there. It’s just us.”

Just us. Dream huffs. “You’re actually stupid.”

George yawns, dropping his head into the crook of Dream’s neck and wrapping his arms over his shoulders. “Okay, I’m tired. Let’s go home so you can tuck me in.”

Dream huffs, grabbing the underside of George’s thighs and standing. “You big baby.”

“Can’t hear you, I’m sleeping.” George mumbles into his skin. Dream smiles, feeling George’s fluffy hair brush against his skin as he walks back towards town.

Sapnap sighs softly, tugging off his shoes once he gets inside the house. The hum of his fridge is too loud in his ears as he trudges off to his room, unable to concentrate.

He thinks back to his conversation with Dream and George. *How could he have possibly seen or heard me following them? Like, I was being pretty stealthy.* He thinks, changing into his nightwear. *He’s so fast.*

The thought lingers and bothers him at the back of his mind, like a song stuck in your head. Doubt begins to grow in his chest, weighing him down as he tries to wash up. *He can also hear insanely well. That was just weird.*

Am I crazy, or did George tell me vampires have enhanced senses? He sets his toothbrush down warily. He scoffs at himself. *What am I thinking? He hates vampires. And Dream isn’t a vampire. He wouldn’t be with Dream if he was one.*

Yeah. There’s no way.

He tries to recall the various rants George has gone off on, explaining his discoveries and findings. Sappnap feels guilty for not listening as well as he wishes he had, but also irritated. *Is it really just a coincidence? I mean, Dream would have to be a real hellspawn to do this to George if he actually was...* He swallows uneasily.

Fuck. The doubt is crushing him.

Could Dream actually be a vampire?

He hates it. He hates that he's considering it. But he has to, for George's safety, right?

Let's just start..I've never seen him eat. I've never seen him in the sun. I've never seen him in a mirror. But then again, I've only met him like twice or something. They just went on a date at like one in the morning. And apparently, that's the only time they've been going on dates. Is that because George knows or did Dream manage to convince him to go out at one in the morning for a date over and over again?

George isn't an idiot, but how much would he be willing to let slide for this guy?

He feels like he's gonna throw up.

It just doesn't make sense. There's something so wrong here.

Let's just say he is a vampire. Sappnap thinks. *What would I even do about it? Tell George? That won't do anything but push him away from me. God, I couldn't do that to him.*

He desperately wants to know what Dream did to make George so upset. *What am I missing here? I mean, Dream is scary. He's really scary. But does that really mean he's a vampire?*

What kind of vampire pretends to date a vampire hunter?

Does Dream even know that he hunts vampires? He has to, right? It's like his whole life!

Sapnap loses his breath for a moment. *Maybe Dream does know.*

And that's why he's getting close to George.

He wants to kill him for it.

Sapnap straightens his posture, a jolt of fear rushing up his spine.

Holy shit. Dream is a vampire.

He rushes to grab a jacket, not bothering to change out of his nightwear. *I have to tell someone. He could be in danger.*

He races down the hall and hastily sticks his feet in his shoes before stumbling out the front door and down the street.

It's for his own good.

“Thank you for being understanding,” Sapnap sighs, heart heavy. “I just want him to be okay.”

“Of course. I see you really care, considering how...fast you decided to share the news.” The mayor says, eyeing Sapnap’s silk pajamas.

Sapnap smiles sheepishly. “Sorry, sir.”

“No matter.” He waves his hand dismissively before placing it on Sapnap’s back, gently but firmly pushing him as they walk. “You don’t need to worry any longer. Here at the mayor’s office, we take these matters very seriously.”

“Thank God for that.” Sapnap smiles innocently, relieved that George would be safe now.

“Yes,” Schlatt agrees. “George Davidson is in good hands. I assure you.”

Chapter End Notes

they made out that's pretty much it

Killing the Butterflies

Chapter Summary

promo-ing the discord again <https://discord.gg/FxCTxAfFJe>

anyway tysm for your support on this so far >:] id love to hear your thoughts on this one so leave a comment if you want

Warnings for chapter 15: graphic violence, explicit homophobia, blood

enjoy :D

The door closes with a click.

“Really? *Davidson* ?” Wilbur muses to himself, stepping beside Schlatt. “He is the *last person* I would expect to be involved with blood-suckers.”

Schlatt’s trained eyes haven’t moved from the door since Sapnap had closed it behind him.

“Yes...” Schlatt drawls. His grip on his pen tightens slightly. “I was hoping we wouldn’t have any complications. But I suppose life isn’t all that simple.”

Wilbur crosses his arms, turning to the door. “Well, what do we do?”

Silence.

Wilbur speaks. “We could exile him, but then again-”

He’s interrupted by the sound of a quick, precise snap.

Wilbur turns back to the mayor.

Schlatt’s right hand is dripping in deep black ink, the staining liquid dripping between his fingers

and onto the mahogany. The broken fountain pen remains clutched in his hand.

“We can’t afford to take any chances.” Schlatt mutters darkly. “We can’t just move the problem.”

“Then what do we do?” Wilbur asks.

Schlatt closes his hand into a fist around the broken utensil. “We need to destroy it.”

Wilbur huffs, an eager smile on his lips. “Fine by me.”

“I want Davidson and the vampire captive and alive. Bring them back here right away.” Schlatt stands suddenly, jabbing a finger into Wilbur’s chest. “*Alive*, you hear me?”

Wilbur nods, fiddling with the cuffs of his sleeves. “Fine, yes.” He replies with a roll of his eyes.

“The officers need to be ready in five.” Schlatt says, voice low. “Bring two horse wagons.”

“Yes sir.” Wilbur says, stepping out of the dimly lit room.

Once he’s left, Schlatt turns to face the window. The ink continues to drip from his soaked palm, pitch-black liquid seeping into the wrinkles of his skin. A puddle forms at his feet.

I’m too close just to lose everything now.

“Morning, handsome.” Dream greets warmly, turning around with a closed umbrella at his side.

The name doesn’t even phase George at this point. “Morning.” He grins sluggishly.

After last night, they'd both passed out on George's bed and the last thing George remembers is Dream wrapping his arms around his waist before he fell asleep.

George's chest blooms with warmth. *He cuddled with me last night. He trusts himself now.*

He lets me trust him now.

He rubs his eyes with his palm and walks past Dream into the kitchen. "What's the umbrella for?"

"Well..." Dream follows him into the kitchen, setting the umbrella on the island and walking towards George. "I was thinking we could go out for breakfast this morning- or, for brunch, since you slept for *ever* ." He teases lightly.

George feels a hand rest on the top of his head and ruffle his hair lightly, and he allows himself to smile and close his eyes for a moment as he responds. "It's not my fault you don't really need sleep." He retaliates, void of any actual fight in his tone. "Where do you wanna go to eat, anyway? You know you don't even have to come with me for meals."

"Yeah, I know." Dream drawls, wrapping his arms around George's waist and pulling him close, settling his cheek on top of George's hair. "I feel better knowing you're safe, though." He mumbles, many words sounding more like hums than proper diction.

George knows he can protect himself, but it's a nice sentiment nonetheless.

"I can defend myself." George responds.

"You can," Dream agrees warmly. "You're very strong."

"Yes." George smiles ear-to-ear. "I could beat your ass."

"Not *that* strong." Dream replies, holding him tighter. "Maybe one day, though. Keep making out with your victims and maybe you'll get there."

George whacks him playfully on the arm that Dream has around his waist. “You’re lucky I even put up with you.” He says, fondly leaning back into Dream’s chest.

“Oh, yeah I know, you hate me *so* much, don’t you?”

George cranes his neck to look up and to glare at Dream with a huge smirk on his face. “Yup. I absolutely despise you.”

Dream plants a small kiss on the tip of George’s nose. “ *Oh no*, whatever will I do?” Dream laments as they continue to look at one another.

Between their looks, they share a playful admiration. One that can’t be faked, can’t be pulled out of thin air.

This is real. George feels lighter, tilting his head into Dream’s neck. *I’m so glad he’s real.*

This close, George can feel the vibrations in Dream’s chest when he speaks. It’s deep, more low than the average person. George wonders if maybe that’s because of him being a vampire, or if he was always like this.

After finally letting go of each other, they share a brief kiss on the lips and Dream picks the umbrella back up, leading them towards the front door.

“Are there always this many...people out?” Dream asks as he warily glances around at passing people, slouching a little next to George so that they share the umbrella. He’s careful to keep his skin covered in it’s shadow.

“This is a pretty normal day, so I guess so.” George answers.

His eyes flit over in his peripheral vision to Dream, seeing his fingers drumming a little too quickly on the umbrella handle and eyes scanning back and forth to any person that’s within 30 feet of them. George smiles sympathetically, placing a gentle hand on his arm.

The drumming stops. He drops his voice a little lower. "They're not gonna know you're a vampire, calm down. You look like any other guy."

Dream scrunches his nose up with skepticism, watching a couple with two daughters pass them. "It still feels...wrong. It's been a while since I've just...walked around. A-And there's literally no rain or anything, this umbrella is making me look stupid."

"Well..." George teases. "They wouldn't be wrong to think you're stupid."

Dream scoffs with a fond smile, shaking his head. "Wow, thanks for the reassurance, *George*, I really appreciate it."

"Anytime." George says back, leaning into Dream just a little bit more. "But really, you're fine. People will just think we're shielding ourselves from the sun."

"A-Alright." Dream replies.

"Aren't you used to this? You've been in town before, acting as a human, what's wrong?" George asks.

"Well I *have*, but..." Dream bites his lip. "I didn't care...before."

George raises an eyebrow. "Before...?"

Dream glances in his direction, immediately breaking into an annoyed smile. "You know I mean you, d-don't make me explain."

"So what you're saying is...you *care* about me?" George teases.

"Yes, okay?!" Dream chuckles, walking a little closer to George. "You're so whiny."

“I’m not.” George rolls his eyes. Their elbows brush against each other.

As they take another turn farther into town, the amount of people grows less and less on the sidewalks and more shrubbery decorates the thin walkways. George had suggested a steak place that was on the far end of town, and said that the owner there knew him and he always got an amazing meal. Expensive as hell, though.

Eventually, with the air growing more quiet, George takes notice how Dream had intertwined their hands over the umbrella handle. It makes George’s chest bloom with excitement, knowing that simple things like that had become second nature between them.

He returns his focus to their shoes as they walk.

Dream swings the glass door open and holds it for George as the two of them head inside the restaurant.

It’s a rather cozy establishment that George had grown fond of over the last couple years. The tables are draped with white tablecloths, but with casual snacks to contrast the otherwise formal look, including crackers and condiments out beside them.

Windows are partially covered with vines, the tiled floors nicely cleaned and wooden chairs are paired with cushions that look carefully fluffed.

The last time George was here, it was a late night and he remembered feeling lost, not wanting to be stuck in his house for any longer. The owner must have gotten used to him coming in, not ordering anything and just sitting for a while, looking out the window and fiddling with the straw in his water.

But George feels prideful when he steps through the door this time, each step he takes through the diner begins to redefine what the place means to him, now that Dream is by his side.

A waitress approaches them with a polite smile, and leads them to a free table in a shaded area, using a gentle hand on George’s arm to guide them through the maze of tables.

George flinches slightly at the touch at first, but quickly ignores it. *Small town. Being this friendly is normal for most of them.*

She seats them both and brings them water as Dream looks around the restaurant nervously.

George orders his food, feeling Dream's gentle gaze on him. The waitress pockets her pen and nods, walking into the kitchen. George looks out the window, watching a couple of birds on the sidewalk peck for seeds.

After a few seconds, he can feel Dream's eyes on him.

"Are you gonna say something, or just keep looking at me?" George jokes, eyes not leaving the window.

"I'm not looking." Dream says dismissively, and George catches him looking away in his peripheral vision. "Why would I want to look at you?"

George looks at Dream with an unimpressed stare. "Why would you?" George raises his brows teasingly.

Dream pauses for a moment, then leans across the table and sets his elbow down, resting his chin on his hand nonchalantly.

"Because you're cute." Dream admits.

George turns a light shade of pink, flicking Dream on the forehead. Dream pouts at the action, even though it didn't hurt at all.

"Quiet, idiot." George whispers, giggling with a mix of embarrassment and anxiety. "Someone might hear you."

"It wouldn't be news to them." Dream shrugs. "Who cares, anyway? If they say anything to us I'll

just be-”

Dream is interrupted by a kick in the leg from George, and notices that the waitress was on her way over.

The waitress places the plate in front of George. “Enjoy, sweetheart.”

He smiles bashfully and thanks the woman as she walks away.

“Steak for breakfast? I thought that was more of a dinner thing.” Dream comments, slightly glaring at the waitress as she walks past him and into the kitchen.

“How would you know?” George shrugs, picking up his utensils.

Dream scoffs, “It’s not like I know *nothing* about the human world. I was human too, you know.”

“Alright.” George says gently. He feels bad for teasing Dream about it but can’t bring himself to apologize, so instead he says “Yeah, steak is more of a dinner food. It’s busy at dinner though. And I like steak.”

Dream nods, leaning back and looking out the window in thought.

George finishes chewing before he speaks again, feeling weird eating without offering anything. “I know you won’t eat but do you want to try or something? I feel bad eating when you have nothing.” He admits.

Dream smiles sympathetically. “No, I’m fine. But- ooh! I do want to try something. Hold on.”

Dream grabs George’s plate and slides it towards himself. George watches him cut a piece of meat from the steak slab. Suddenly he shoves the fork to George’s face. “Open up.”

“What? No! I’m not a baby, Dream.” George blushes lightly, glancing around self consciously (though no one was watching).

“Is this not something couples do?”

“We don’t have to be the couple that feeds each other at the dinner table.” George scoffs lightheartedly, grabbing the fork from Dream’s hand.

Dream smiles at him. “We can’t feed *each other*, but you should let me treat you, because I can.”

He’s so endearing. George thinks, annoyed with his own lovesickness. “Whatever.” He smiles a little, sticking the steak piece in his mouth.

“I mean, I’m a little hungry,” Dream mentions offhandedly. “But we can’t do much about it. Although, I could bite that waitress over there.” He jokes.

George shrugs. “Go for it.”

“*What?* Are you serious?” Dream looks at him with wide eyes.

“No, idiot.” George deadpans, serious for a moment before bursting into giggles.

He briefly considers that Dream could genuinely be hungry, remembering with heavy guilt the way Dream had admitted to starving himself for George’s safety. Not wanting to ruin the mood, though, he decides not to push it for now.

When the waitress passes their table, George flags her down.

“Could I get some tea? With sugar, please.” He asks politely.

“Aw, you don’t even need sugar. You’re so sweet!” She smiles. George can practically feel her pinch his cheek.

George blushes lightly, sputtering a pathetic “yeah”, before she leaves to retrieve his tea. Dream stares blankly at her as she walks away.

Once she retrieves his tea and takes his empty plate, she glances at Dream, who's staring her down.

"Is he alright?" She asks, somewhat jokingly but still nervous, setting the teacup in front of him with sugar and milk.

George looks over to Dream, who was staring wordlessly at the waitress.

"He's fine." George smiles apologetically. "Sorry, he doesn't get out much."

"No worries, sugar." She smiles sweetly and places the check on the table. "Whenever you're ready."

She walks off, the click of her heels following her out of the dining area and into the kitchen.

Dream stands suddenly as if to follow her. George shoots his arm out and pulls him down instantly.

"*Dream* ." He hisses. "Relax."

"Now I really *am* going to bite that waitress."

"*Dream*, stop." George shakes his head, trying to fight the smile on his face.

Dream huffs and settles into his seat as George draws his wallet from his pocket to pay for the meal.

"You're no fun." Dream pouts with feigned sadness.

"You literally don't even like killing people, quit your whining." George replies, leaving his money on the table as they take their leave.

On the way home, Dream's hands seem tight around the handle of their shared umbrella.

"George, can I talk to you about something?" Dream asks. His tone is anxious, hands fidgety. George observes his movements.

"Um...okay." George frowns a little. "That's very anxiety inducing, considering what we've already gone through."

"It's nothing bad! Unless you say no, I guess." Dream's face grows pink as he struggles to come up with the right words.

"I- Well, I was wondering if...can I be your- no. Can you be- Will you be my boyfriend?" He smiles nervously. "I know we said we'd talk about it later, so...I-I figured now might be the time to ask. B-But I know that, uh, I mean- I understand if you don't want to, I was just- wanted to ask...and uh..." He trails off, face blooming a bright rose color. "Maybe...the waitress just reminded me of what I could lose..."

George just stares at his face, the furrowed brows above his distressed eyes. His face is pink (though it's not like George can tell easily), expression embarrassed. *I can't believe I make him like this.*

"Hm...I dunno." George shrugs.

He decides to drop the act when he sees Dream's dejected and dismayed expression.

"I'm joking, Dream. You can be my...my boyfriend, or whatever." George says, butterflies filling his stomach in the most pleasant way at the word *boyfriend* on his tongue.

"I asked if *you* could be *my* boyfriend." Dream says, smiling a little.

"Mm no." George smiles, grin splitting his quickly reddening face. "You are mine."

"No. I don't think so."

George pouts with his bottom lip in an overly-dramatic thoughtful expression. “Maybe if you kiss me I’ll consider switching ownership.”

Dream raises a hand to George’s jaw, gently cupping his face as he leans down to press their lips together.

“Should be thanking that waitress right now.” George whispers.

“Shut up!” Dream hisses through George’s giggles. He kisses George, it’s slow and gentle. George tilts his head and smiles through the kiss.

Elated joy spreads through George’s chest as they linger in their kiss. The simple way that Dream rubs his thumb back and forth over his cheek feels perfect.

George’s face warms even more at a realization. *I am so happy.* He realizes, feeling light, as if he could float.

My boyfriend.

“What the hell?”

A foreign voice sounds behind them, making George whip around immediately, breaking away. His stomach drops.

Someone neither of them recognize is standing behind them, a disgusted expression on his face. George has seen him around the village only a couple of times, not knowing him by name. The man was slightly older than him, yellow-blonde hair and visible brown stubble, dressed in a faded blue suit.

George flushes, mortified, torn between holding Dream closer to hide himself or pushing him away and hoping Dream understands why.

“That’s disgusting, at least keep that shit in the bedroom.” He scolds with a judgemental stare.

“There’s children that could see you... *gays* doing that.”

What if he tells someone? George thinks pensively, unmoving from shock. *We’re so fucked. Why didn’t I think before just kissing Dream out here? Now everyone’s going to-*

Dream gently pulls George back and walks past him towards the man.

George watches, confused, until Dream abruptly grabs the man by the collar of his suit and lifts him off the ground.

The man goes wide-eyed, his legs kicking back and forth as they leave the ground. “Wh-What! Hey- man, you- I-” He sputters out, suddenly panicking.

George watches Dream’s pupils shrink into slits, boring into the other man’s eyes with unbridled rage.

“If you ever so much as *look* at us ever again, I will *drain the life from your body* and leave you rotting for all the birds to pick you over.” Dream hisses with the most anger George had ever seen from him.

The tone of his voice makes George shiver. *Can’t imagine how he feels.* George thinks amusingly, watching the man’s face lose it’s color as he’s set back on the ground roughly, nearly falling over.

“A-Alright, yeah! Got it!” He croaks, stumbling back quickly before running down the sidewalk. They watch him for a lingering moment as he runs off down the street, completely abandoning his previously assertive nature.

George stares open mouthed as Dream turns around with a big smile on his face. “You okay?” He asks, seemingly unbothered by what just happened.

“I’m...fine.” He says, eventually. He tries to hold it, but lets out an inappropriate laugh, which makes Dream laugh in turn.

“That guy’s *face*, oh my God.” George giggles. “I was so scared he was gonna tell.” *I could tell*

him to be more careful about exposing his instincts, but oh well. It's not like they can hurt us, anyways.

"I'd never let that happen." Dream smiles, leaning down and pecking him on the lips. George smiles and gives him a quick but tight hug.

When they part, Dream raises his eyebrows teasingly. "What do you say about ...taking this elsewhere?"

"I'd like that." George says quietly.

Giddy, George grabs Dream's hand and they make their way home.

"-And that's how I become a bat." Dream says. "Pretty cool."

"Very interesting." George says, lowering the umbrella once they reach some shaded trees. "I don't often see vampires in their bat form. I suppose it's because they don't have much use for it."

"Considering it's only really good for flying, yeah it's probably not very common. When I'm in bat form I'm basically blind, like you." Dream explains, gesturing with his hands.

"I'm not blind! I'm *colorblind*." George frowns, but his stomach is full of butterflies.

"Yeah, okay." Dream smiles.

Suddenly, Dream lets out a sharp gasp, followed by an agonizing cry.

George stops, shock shooting up his spine as he whips to face his partner. The butterflies die instantly.

Dream's face is paralyzed with horror, looking down to see a dagger in the back of his leg.

A silver dagger.

No. George's heart drops into his stomach.

George gasps as Dream falls to his knees, going to grab his arms. "Dream!" George cries, catching Dream's wrists as he falls on his knees.

"Stop! Step away from the vampire!" A demanding voice resounds through the air, shocking George to his core.

Approaching them is a group of heavily armed officers that George recognises work for the mayor. Shell shock surges through his body, dread flooding his mind.

They know. They know he's a vampire. That's why they're here.

They're going to hurt him. And there's nothing I can do about it.

I can't let this happen.

He tries to grip Dream's arms and help him to his feet, but Dream remains on the forest floor, jittering from the intense pain shooting through his leg.

"What the hell do you want?" George asks shakily, looking up in intense panic as a heavily armed man with a buzzcut approaches them.

"The mayor wants you two. Make this easier for both of us and comply." The man says, devoid of emotion.

Dream reaches down and pulls the knife out of his leg by the handle with a growl, throwing it into a tree behind the group of officers. It sticks to the wood by the blade, too precise to be unintentional.

He doesn't intend to kill any one of them, but it's a clear threat.

Unamused by his antics, the officers are quick to raise their weapons. Their numbers seem to grow the more he tries to count, realizing that the officers were beginning to crowd in on all sides.

Too many. Too much. Dream is hurt. This is bad, this is bad, this is so bad.

George tries again to help Dream to his feet. This time, the vampire is able to stand.

"Get behind me, George." Dream mutters raspily, grabbing the human's arm. George steps back, lingering behind the vampire uneasily.

They're practically surrounded. George's heart is caught in his throat, his whole body going rigid in a way he hates. He holds onto Dream's arm with shaky fingers, looking up to his face in hopes of seeing fearlessness.

His body is submerged in dread when he sees Dream's face plagued with panic.

"Dream..." George mutters as he places timid hands on Dream's bicep. *Dream can protect us, he can help, he can save us. He has to save us.*

George sees a fierce hatred flicker in his eyes as they begin to dilate like an animal. Half of his face is cast in heavy indigo shadows from the tree's shade.

Dream stands his ground in front of George with arms spread on either of his sides, a final attempt to protect him.

"*You're not fucking touching him.*" Dream growls. His voice stems mostly from deep in his chest.

Oh God. George's eyes go back and forth between Dream's scowl and the guards closing in.

He's gonna hurt them. Badly.

But they might kill him if he doesn't.

"Dream..." George places a timid hand between his broad shoulder blades. Dream doesn't falter, and his teeth slowly become more bared as the officers close in. "Dream, *please*." He says, voice breaking. He doesn't know what he's asking for.

Dream doesn't respond once more, and instead gently pushes George closer behind him without turning his attention away.

Everything seems to go in slow motion, yet all too fast once the officers attack.

The patrol group is quick to grab Dream and attempt to restrain him. But as he begins to shove them away with harsh pushes, they realize they'll have to use force.

More of them storm in, and begin to grab at Dream's arms and pull him away all at once.

George can see Dream's eyes dart in every direction as he fights back mercilessly, shaking the guards off him like a rabid animal, desperately trying to get them off and get back to George.

One of the officers takes out a knife, and slices at Dream's shoulder.

Dream cries out in pain and slams a fist into the officer's face, and the officer clutches his nose and screams out in agony. Another guard is grabbed by the vest and thrown to the dirt and gravel with such unbridled force that it almost makes George feel pity.

Another one, this time Dream takes the close proximity he has as an opportunity to bite into the patrol officer's upper arm.

George feels lightheadedness begin to drown him as he watches. It doesn't feel real, and for a moment he almost convinces himself it's not.

It was over. God, I thought it was over. When does it end?

Everything is shaking. His vision, his arms, his fingers, his legs, everything.

He can faintly hear someone screaming Dream's name before he realizes it's himself.

George manages a step forwards, but he's only free of restraints for a moment before he, too, is pulled back by multiple officers. They grab him by his arms and yank him back, keeping him still with an unnecessary amount of force.

He struggles in their grip, attempting to pull his arms forward pitifully, knowing full well that he didn't have a fraction of the strength Dream had. He kicks one's shin, but only receives a stronger kick in return, causing his legs to give out and his knees to meet the rough ground, arms still tightly gripped. He tries desperately to pull his arms away.

"Get away from him!" George hears Dream's voice echo from somewhere.

He can only watch helplessly as Dream is piled on further and further. He thinks he hears a rib crack when an officer hits the ground.

For me. The tears in George's eyes feel hot. He's doing it for me. He knows he's going to get taken away and he's still trying to protect me.

Please, Dream. You can fight them.

You have to.

I can't lose you now. I just found you.

Just as Dream's about to throw another well-aimed punch, he's sliced in the back of the neck with a silver blade, forcing him to stop in his tracks.

"DREAM! NO!" George exclaims with all the force he can muster as he thrashes in the unrelenting

grip of the guards.

Dream cries out in pure agony, reaching up and touching the back of his neck where he was slashed. An officer uses the opportunity to kick him in the back of his legs, forcing him onto his knees. When he tries to stand, he's pushed to the ground by a boot.

They're quick to tie his hands behind his back the second he falls to the ground, and George barely registers that his hands are also being bound, hardly having the ability to react to his own aching wounds, which were begging for his attention.

The officials that were still unharmed slash the back of each of Dream's legs, ensuring he won't stand, which George finds unnecessarily cruel as he listens to the burning flesh and Dream's ragged breaths.

"Fuck you." Dream grits out, weak.

He shuts his eyes tight, unable to watch, but instead listens as Dream sobs in pain over and over again that each feel like a stab of their own into George's back.

When George looks up and sees the damage done, his breath hitches. He resists the urge to look away.

Dream's nose is bleeding, the blood from the back of his neck now smeared across his shoulder and dripping down his collar. His disheveled hair hangs in his eyes, unable to be tucked away and muddled with dripping red. His chin is bruised, and his eyes are dark. He refuses to look at George, leaf-green eyes instead meeting the earth beneath his dirtied pants.

"I'm so sorry." Dream says, voice low and raspy. "I'll- I'll get away, I'll-" He's interrupted again by a hit to the side of his head, nearly making him fall onto his side with its brutality.

"*Dream-*" George rasps. It's all he can manage, before he's being forcefully brought to his feet again.

"No, no no no *George-* !" Dream sits up on his knees, only to be shoved down again.

He can feel himself being dragged across the forest floor, towards a metal horse wagon. He tries to resist by kicking his legs out, just barely, but it's no use.

He's disappointed in his own pitiful attempt at putting up a fight, but there's something more important for him to worry about.

His heart aches, thinking about what they could do to Dream.

All because we were discovered.

I should have been more careful. This was all my fault. I shouldn't have gone in public with him like that, I shouldn't have dragged Dream into this. It's all my fault. Why do I ruin every good thing in my life?

Guilt eats away at him slowly as they lock up the wagon, tears brimming his eyes. His thoughts run wildly through his brain, like a rabbit from its predator. He just wants them to slow so he can breathe, but he finds it only stresses him out further to try and slow his brain.

He's suddenly hyper aware of the tough rope tying his wrists together behind his back, scratching at his sensitive skin. He faintly hears yells that they're also taking Dream away to a separate horse wagon, he knows from the way he's shouting and struggling.

"You'll be sorry! I'll make you fucking sorry!" Dream's voice faintly cuts through the metal wall of the wagon.

Fear and dread crawl up his throat like bile. It hurts to breathe.

He doesn't want to let himself cry, so he buries his face into his knees in hopes that it will prevent the tears from slipping down his face.

It doesn't work.

The harsh rumble against stones comes to a sudden stop, and nearly makes George fall onto his side, save for his elbow to stop him. His throat burns with fear and cries that died after relentless struggles in his chains and falls victim to fragility. It was a painful reminder that he was human.

That without Dream, that's all he was.

He's quick to wipe his eyes once he hears them begin to open up the wagon.

Two officers step inside and pull him out by his arms, their grips were much harsher than necessary. He's walked into the building as he legs behind, and they weave their way through the halls and past multiple painfully grey rooms. George tries to pay attention, searching for any way to escape the situation, but his mind continues to wander back to Dream.

Dream tried so hard to save us. Just the thought makes him want to cry all over again. He's in danger. He's in danger right now and I can't do anything, as always.

He finds himself missing the warm touch of Dream's hands in his own. He holds his own hands together to compensate for it.

In time, they reach a dark, dungeon-like room with a rickety table in the center, chairs on either side.

From what he can see, the walls are made of uneven rocks and cement, surely to be as cold and rough as his bleeding nose feels hot. He's seated in a single chair on one side of the table, his arms are quickly cuffed together and stuck to the surface with a short chain. When he rests his wrists on the table, they burn from the cold. He shivers.

The officers abandon him in the cell once he's restrained, they lock the door and leave him in a dreadful silence.

What am I going to do? George laments, thoughts drenched in horror. What do they want me for? Is it a crime to be involved with vampires? Is that why most of the town doesn't talk about them?

He looks around the room, then cranes his neck to try and see his restraints, failing to do so when a sharp pain jolts in his spine from one of the wounds he was left with.

The room was completely empty except for three chairs, one occupied by George, and a metal table. Nothing to assist in an escape even if his hands were free.

After a few minutes, two figures enter the room, taking their seats across from him in sinister silence.

The officer once holding him has since left the room and stood guard outside as the door slams shut with a clang. He shifted nervously, unable to make out details of his captors' faces in the low lighting.

A sudden, blinding and buzzing white light forces him to blink and grimace away, and slowly manages to flutter his vision to adjust. George is met with two tall men, their faces lit with an unwelcoming five-o'clock shadow from the harsh light above.

The one on the left is one he recognizes, he's wearing a yellow knit sweater much too cheery for his stern face and a dull red military cap, his curly brown hair peeking from beneath.

It's Wilbur Soot, George knows him distantly. The mayor's spokesperson. He gave speeches on Mayor Schlatt's behalf.

George never told anyone this, but the guy had honestly always creeped him out. He always smiled too much, and had conversations that were too short to be friendly.

The one on the right he doesn't recognize, he's dressed in a black-tie attire that made the subtle maroon undertones in his eyes stand out, even in the dim lighting.

His facial hair is what makes George realize, with a pang of trepidation, who this was.

That's the mayor.

His palms quickly grow sweaty, blood running cold, adrenaline rushing through his veins and shutting down his ability to think logically.

George swallows thickly. “Where’s Dream?” He manages.

“The vampire?” Wilbur barks out a laugh, british accent tainting his words. “You can’t be serious.”

The mayor sets an arm on the others’ shoulder, an attempt to calm him. “Listen, Davidson. Me and Wilbur here just want to ask you a couple questions about the time you’ve been spending with your vampire friend. We don’t take vampire cases *lightly*, so it’s best for everyone if you talk.”

“I’m not saying shit.” George grits.

“Let’s start with the first question. How long ago did you meet him?” Schlatt tries, seemingly ignorant of George’s resistance.

George narrows his eyes. “I refuse to speak.”

Wilbur slams a fist against the table with a piercing bang, making his chains rattle. George hates himself for flinching. “You think you’re too good for words, huh?”

George just stares at him, jaw tight.

Wilbur stands abruptly and looms over him. “Do you know how disgusting it is what you did? You’re lucky we didn’t execute you on the spot. We still have the option now, if you don’t speak up.”

“Wilbur, Wilbur,” Schlatt assures, much too casually. “Just give him some space. We’ve got them both secured, we’re on no time limit here.” Wilbur grunts to himself and eyes George as he slowly sits back down.

Both. They have him. “Is Dream okay?” He can’t stop himself from asking, as pathetic as it sounds.

“Now you want to talk?” He chuckles horribly. George wishes he could punch him. “He’s not dead, if that’s what you want to know.” Schlatt rolls his eyes. “Don’t worry your pretty little head about it, we’re considering what to do with him for the time being.”

Oh thank God. A fraction of the tensity in his chest is relieved. “Don’t kill him. Please, that’s all I ask.”

“As if you *deserve* to request anything.” Wilbur scorns.

“We’ve been told this has been going on for at *least* 2 weeks,” Schlatt says, looking down at the paper filled to the edges with typewriter print on the table. “Your friend was rightfully concerned about you. But not for the reasons he told us.”

George’s eyes flicker upwards again at that .

Sapnap. He wouldn’t...

“It was so sad to see him so upset for you, George. I can’t imagine how he felt when he went to find out that his neighbor and close friend had been fooling around with a *vampire*, after all that trust, and you broke it. He was so afraid for your life, though you should’ve been the one doing that.”

“It-” George swallows painfully. “It wasn’t like that. He seemed fine, he- I didn’t break his trust. He was just worried for me.”

“You put Sapnap and this *entire town* in danger with your antics.” Wilbur says. “I’d call that a break of trust.”

“I didn’t put anyone in danger!” George says. “Dream’s not like other vampires, really!”

“If that’s so, then what’s all this we heard about him chasing you in the woods?”

“That-”

George is stumped. *How the hell do they know about that?*

“He was confused. He didn’t really want to hurt me.”

“Confused?” Wilbur says, incredulously.

A sigh leaves Schlatt’s mouth, as he leans back in his seat. “Tell me, why do you care so much what happens to him?” He tilts his head. “I’m genuinely curious, Davidson.”

“He’s.. he’s just different.” George tries, nearly choking on his words.

“ *Different?* What are you, fucking gay?” Schlatt laughs.

He coughs. “No.”

“You know, you just make this harder and harder for yourself by prolonging this interrogation. If you tell us what we need to know, there might even be a chance you get off scot-free.”

George tilts his chin up. “I have the right to remain silent. I’m getting Dream back, and once I do, I’m going to expose you for who you really are. I’ll ruin you and all of your status once the town knows of your cruelty.”

Abruptly, Schlatt stands, immediately shattering George’s faux safety bubble. He grabs George’s shirt and shoves him against the wall with a thud, making the back of his head hit the concrete. He’s held with an alarming amount of force, chains resistant to the pull, reddening his captive wrists. “I-”

“You think you’re getting out of this alive, don’t you? If you keep this up, you aren’t.” Schlatt smiles wickedly, a twisted joy present in his eyes.

He leans in beside George’s ear, a little *too* close to his neck. Feeling the air on his skin, George struggles and leans away.

“I don’t think.. you understand what proceeds this interrogation.” He says, voice dropping to a whisper.

George somehow thinks Wilbur will step in and keep him in line, tell him to step off or *something*, but he just stands there and watches, seemingly unphased.

He chokes back a whimper that threatens to leave his throat. “What the fuck is *wrong* with you?” He asks in a quavering voice.

“Me?” Schlatt *laughs*. It makes George’s heart beat at an unhealthily quick pace. He desperately wants to back away, but he’s already pressed to the wall. “What’s wrong with *me*? You’re the one fucking around with a vampire. Aren’t you a hunter, Davidson?”

How do they know about all of this?

George gives Schlatt a valiant, sharp kick in the shin, but immediately regrets it once he’s thrown against the desk, chained wrists hitting the rim and keeping him bound as he sinks to the floor with a groan.

“Jesus fuck- Wilbur, get the officer to escort him to the dungeons.” Schlatt says, breathing heavily. He combs a hand through his hair and steps over George, walking to the other side of the desk.

Wilbur leaves the room and fetches the officer standing outside the room. Two enter and unlock George’s wrists, hoisting him up by his arms. They re-tie his wrists behind his back, the irritated skin only growing more raw.

“NO! Let go! Fucking let me go!” He thrashes back and forth, but it only results in one of the guards further tightening his restraints. He groans at the pain, and is shoved down the hall with no care as to whether he can keep up or not.

If Dream were here, he’d have no problem throwing them off.

He stumbles into the orange light of sunset blanketing the courthouse and surrounding shrubbery, and is once again tossed into the back of a wagon and tied from his chains to the cart with a thick rope.

Where are they taking me now?

George has a feeling it won't be somewhere desirable.

He's quickly growing tired of the fear and dread swirling around unpleasantly in his stomach, plaguing his thoughts. He tries to see a situation where they escape the government and end up safe somewhere, but he just can't picture it. He sighs, sorrowful, keeping his wrists still to ease the pain on them.

As the cart begins to move, George closes his eyes and does his best not to focus on the situation.

Dream. Please be okay. Please, come save me? I... George sniffles. I need you, now. I'm sorry I never told you that enough.

The horses eventually pull into an area behind the town hall. When George looks heavenward, he sees that all traces of sunlight have gone, now, for the sky has grown a deep midnight blue, dotted with stars.

How long was I there?

There's a large stone wall, a looming, spiked iron gate stands between the bricks. Torches are lit on either side. George swallows.

They unlock the horse wagon, pulling him out of the cart by his shaky arms. He's scared to resist, though he wants nothing more than to headbutt both the officers, spit in their faces, and wriggle out of the stupid rope tying his arms together.

They might kill me if I try anything. That won't get me anywhere.

As soon as he's out, he immediately begins to wonder where they're keeping Dream. Not that it wasn't on his mind the entire ride to the dungeons.

Are they keeping him in a place like where I was? Or somewhere worse? What would be worse than that?

A third guard walks up from behind them as they approach the gate, unlocking it. His stomach is

churning. He feels like throwing up.

They take him through the gates and down some stone stairs. The air is cold in the tunnel they enter, the ground is dirty and it smells of blood and decay. He doesn't know what's going to happen, but he's sure it's nothing good. They turn into a hallway, and George finally realizes what's about to happen. The blood drains from his face.

He sees a line of cells.

There's a line of dirty, empty concrete rooms along the wall. Each is small, a thick chain link fence holding in their captives. He thinks he might see dried blood.

He swallows hard, throat feeling raw.

I'm fucked.

Revelation 19:20

Chapter Summary

hiiii sorry for the wait, this chapter is 32 pages long on docs LOL

I cant wait to see your reactions to this one! leave a comment and kudos if you want bc I'm clout hungry

also here's our discord server its super chill :D <https://discord.gg/FxCTxAfFJe>

Warnings for chapter 16: graphic violence, manipulation

enjoy :D

“ Stay still. ”

The guard shoves Dream into a horse wagon by his head, causing him to fall on his side, thanks to the silver restraints on his hands.

The wagon's door is shut with a loud clang, multiple locks falling into place.

Everything is blurry, everything *hurts*, *god*, it hurts so *much*. *Since when was pain this bad?*

Why can't I just shove it off like I usually do when I'm attacked, why did these stupid officers have to have silver everything ?

I have to get to George.

They're treating me like this because they know I'm a vampire. It's just because I'm a vampire, right?

They won't do anything more to George, right?

The mere thought makes his muscles strain with fury.

He struggles against the restraints on his arms, but it's no use. Despite his inhuman strength, the silver handcuffs only burn more against his skin as he fights them.

His stomach pangs in an awful reminder.

I'm hungry.

I'm weak.

If I can just get some blood, I'll be alright.

I can heal.

For the first time in his life, he finds no hesitation at the thought of killing a human.

I don't care.

They don't deserve to be called human.

I don't know what they want, but I know they hurt George.

Human or not, they hurt George.

George doesn't deserve this.

George did nothing wrong.

It's not fair .

His head swirls, senses muffled with throbbing pains all over his body. In his head, his back, his hands, his knees, *everywhere*.

Every time he makes a movement too quick, it feels like an avalanche collapses onto him.

Is this what dying feels like? Is that what's happening? Am I slowly dying?

He slumps over in the back of the wagon as it begins to wheel away, and allows himself to stop straining and give into the fatigue from his wounds.

It's insanity.

He's never been around this many humans for this long, let alone when he's so hurt he could die in a matter of a couple hours.

His stomach growls loudly with displeasure, pleading for some kind of salvation. He can feel the blood dripping down his neck and legs, staining the dirty floor of the wagon.

He sighs audibly, tipping his head back.

I'm useless.

The ride is short, but it feels infinite with every shaking pound of his heart. The discomfort of his restraints and untreated wounds is constant, but still doesn't manage to be enough of a distraction to bring his mind away from George. He's worried sick, as if his condition couldn't be worse.

It would be bearable if George wasn't roped into all this, but now, because of him, George could be dead right now.

Please. Please say he's safe. Hang on for me, George.

The horses are brought to an abrupt halt, causing Dream to groan as his back hits the metal wall of the wagon.

The barred doors pull open, abruptly.

There's shade wherever we are.

At least I won't be burning alive while being tortured.

Both officers, one shorter with black hair sticking out from his cap, and the other taller with curly brown hair grab him with unnecessary ferocity, even despite his current disposition.

“*Get off.*” Dream growls through a pained breath, feeling his lungs ache to strain the words out.

He weakly pulls away, feeling much too human at the loss of his usual strength. Silver bullets really were a deadly weakness, weren't they?

“Quit your whining.” The black haired one says, tugging Dream back up, and the other assists him in throwing the vampire out of the wagon and onto the ground.

The silver cuffs hit his back as he lands with a whimper.

Dirt sinks under his fingernails, the restraints on his wrists burn, sure to leave a scar.

That is, if he lives long enough for it to scar.

I look so fucking weak right now. This is all I can be? This is all I can do for George right now, really?

Just a pathetic prisoner to be pushed around?

A voice is heard through the fog of pain in Dream's head. “Up.”

He wants to fight, he wants to scream, he wants to kill every single person that had laid a finger on George, he wants to do *anything*.

But every time he tries to move, it feels as if his body is screaming at him to stop in agony.

Before he can attempt to get up by himself, a pair of hands force him to stand on his feet with shaky knees. All the retaliations he wants to throw back are caught in his throat in a mix of pain and deciding that he'd like to keep any sense of mercy he can have at this point.

For George. It's all he can hope for. Hold on for George.

He's brought to a tall, iron gate with spikes lining the top. He observes as the officers unlock it and bring him inside, down some mossy and cracked stone steps. Goosebumps rise along his skin.

They make it down some flights of stairs (with some difficulty) before finally stopping in a hall lined with cells.

A jail? Why would they want a vampire in jail? What are they going to do with me?

They swing the large metal door open and push him inside, with more force than necessary. As quickly as he's pushed in, he's back against the bars with tense fists.

Every ounce of anger begins to bubble over now that he realizes he won't be dying. At least not yet.

"Let me out, you bastards!" He screams at the two guards.

He weakly attempts to pull the bars apart, but starvation has taken a toll on his abilities, as well as the fighting from earlier. He weakly sinks to the ground beside the cell bars.

"Let me out!" He coughs out a half sob.

I'm in a cage. Like an animal.

Dream shuts his eyes tight, wishing to be anywhere but here.

Anywhere but in a cage. Weak. Useless.

He can faintly hear the guards whisper to one another about keeping an eye on him, followed by some echoing footsteps that leave the room. When Dream brings his gaze up, there are two guards left to watch him outside his cell, different from the ones who had taken him out of the wagon.

He tries again pathetically to pull apart the bars, bend them to his will and step through like he knows he should be able to, but the attempt bares fruitless results. He hears a snicker, making his head snap up in an instant.

“No blood available for you now, *leech*. ”

Dream twitches.

“Poor Davidson. You really befriended him for a single meal? How cruel do you have to be?” The officer asked.

His voice is deceptively friendly, higher toned but laced with disgust. Prejudice. Hatred.

“It’s not like that.” Dream rasps.

“Oh, but it is. You think we haven’t seen your kind? Preying on our innocent townsfolk?”

“I-I don’t want to... I’ve never kil-”

“Save your whining for the Devil’s lenience.”

Dream falls silent, eyelids fluttering shut. Nothing more needs to be said.

Am I a monster, just like they’re making me out to be?

But... I know I did all of this for a reason.

There has to be a reason.

“It’s not like that,” He mumbles. “I care about him.”

“Yeah, keep lying to yourself. We all know why you befriended him. I pity that guy, he’s always been kind of a loner.”

“I-I don’t want to hurt him. He cares about me, too.”

“Really? Because last time I checked, he wasn’t thrilled to have you chasing him through the woods like an insane person.” The black haired officer pipes.

How the fuck do they know about that?

He doesn’t have the energy to ask, parting his lips in a pained breath and opening his tired eyes.

“What are you going to do to me?” He meets the officers eyes, wondering if the man feels any remorse for his actions at seeing him so desperate and in pain.

Dark eyes look up and down his slouching frame, unimpressed, as if he were looking over a patch of dead crops.

There’s no emotion in his reply. “That’s not up to me,” He states simply.

“It’s up to the mayor.”

Almost as soon as the words left his mouth, the doors of the decrepit hall burst open with a slam. Dream lets a weak flinch slip.

As soon as he turns, his stomach drops.

A man around his height approaches the cell. His rough mustache and sideburns frame his stern expression, the darkness in his eyes match his pitch-black tailcoat, the white collar of his undershirt turned upwards and a tucked-in burgundy tie drawing attention to the golden buttons that line the length of his torso, and lead to his frilly dress pants.

Even under all of the extravagant attire and his much more built stature now, Dream *knows* that face.

They were friends.

Until Dream had found out that Schlatt had been killing humans every night without his knowledge.

Schlatt stops in front of Dream, face half obscured from rusty prison bars.

“You can go now, Quackity.” Schlatt says.

The guard, who’s name is apparently Quackity, gives Dream one last look of disgust before turning and walking down the hall.

“*Schlatt?*” Dream hisses in disbelief and loathing.

Schlatt’s head tilts to the side in confusion for a moment, then his eyes widen in amusement.

“*Dream?*” Schlatt *laughs*. “Is that really you?”

“You...” Dream seethes, forcing himself to stand on his aching legs. “You *lied* to me.”

Schlatt tilts his head upwards in line with Dream’s furious stare.

“You’re a real mess, fucking hell.” He comments apathetically. “You were at least a *little* strong, before. But good to see you nonetheless, right?”

Dream’s glare burns into Schlatt’s casual expression, teeth baring slightly and his voice laced with a menacing rumble. “Did *you* hurt George? Are *you* the one who did this? Just to torture me *again*?”

“What?” Schlatt tilts his head to the side in calculated boredom. “Oh, no, no, honest to God, I had no clue that *you* were the vampire causing all the trouble.” He leans closer to the bars, a sick smile twitching the corners of his lips upwards. “Does make a lotta’ sense, though.”

Dream growls with a deep fury in his ribcage, lurching forwards and sticking a hand through the bars to try and claw at Schlatt, who steps out of reach, not even caring as much to flinch.

“*I’ll fucking kill you!*” Dream roars, furiously rattling the bars between the two of them. “You’re still killing them, aren’t you? Is *that* what you took George for?”

Schlatt readjusts the cuff of his jacket, and takes a bronze coin out of his pocket, idly fidgeting with it.

“Oh, no, not at all. He’s been a great help, actually!” The mayor laughs in a sick, gravely tone. “He’s been getting rid of competition for *years* now. Too bad he had to fuck it all up.”

Dream’s heart freezes. “What...you mean-?”

“There’s been so much more blood to go around!” Schlatt muses, tossing the coin up and catching it. “Now that half the vampires are six feet under, and all thanks to him. I’m almost sad that he’s going to die so soon.”

He said ‘going to’.

George is still alive.

Dream's eyes dilate, his breath shallows. The walls feel like they're closing in. "You can't- I won't let you! I'll tear you *apart!* I'll-"

"Just like you did to your friend George?" Schlatt says, smiling slyly.

"What?" Dream scrunches his nose at the accusation. "What makes you think *I* hurt George?"

Schlatt sighs, and steps closer to the bars, locking eyes with Dream. "Please explain to me, *Dream,*" He taunts. "What *did* you plan to do to him? I'm curious."

"I-" Dream stutters. "I didn't *plan* to do anything. I was- we were just...talking."

"Do you not see how scared that human is?" Schlatt questions, raising a brow and leaning closer. "He ran from you in that forest, Dream. That's not '*just talking*'. "

Dream's shoulders drop. "Were you... *watching* me?"

"No, I wouldn't waste my time like that." Schlatt huffs with light hilarity at the question. "I was simply passing by." His smile drops, the look in the mayor's eyes is replaced by a deadly stare. "But I did see that human run from you. You *chased* him, Dream. There's no mistaking that."

"No- I- I wasn't-" Dream sputters, gripping the bars tighter. "That was different."

"Oh, was it now?" Schlatt asks, tilting his head slightly. The coin twiddles between his fingers meticulously. "What made it different, then?"

Dream blinks, looking at the ground.

It was different.

It was different...right..?

He clears his strained throat. “George didn’t know...h-he thought I was going to hurt him.”

Schlatt hums. “Were you?”

“No!” Dream immediately snaps back. “Well- I- at the time, maybe...but- I was going to *lose* him, I was scared.”

“*You* were scared, huh?” Schlatt chuckles lowly, pinching the bridge of his nose. “Do you not see how manipulative you are?”

Dream growls. “I am *not* manipulative.”

“Really? Have you *actually* convinced yourself that you care about that human?”

“I *care*. You don’t know shit.” Dream hisses.

“Wait, let me guess,” Schlatt smiles wickedly. “You were going to kill him, you couldn’t, and now you think you’re friends.”

Dream is stumped for a moment.

He briefly considers correcting Schlatt on using the term *friend* instead of boyfriend, but if George was right, and that guy on their walk was anything to show for, maybe their relationship wouldn’t be the best thing to add on top of their already hellish torture.

But...it’s not like Schlatt is *wrong*.

That is pretty much what happened.

Does that make me a bad person?

When Schlatt notices Dream pause, he barks out a laugh. “That *is* it, isn’t it? Ha! That’s terrible!”

“We...we *are* friends.” Dream mumbles, looking down at his roughed-up and bloodied boots.

Schlatt takes a step back, and begins slowly pacing back and forth in front of Dream’s cell. In the silence of the rocky basement, the coin he flicks up and catches over and over again almost sounds like it rings with each flip in the air, until it lands back into a large, firm hand.

“Do you wanna know what George told me?” Schlatt asks with a menacing lilt to his voice. “He said he was scared of you.”

Dream scoffs. “You’re bluffing.”

George isn’t scared of me. He told me that himself.

George knows I wouldn’t hurt him...

...Again.

“Oh, how I wish I was.” Schlatt speaks with darkness laced between each word. “You wouldn’t believe how relieved he was to know that you were in a different cell, away from him.”

“That’s-” Dream can’t focus. The click of Schlatt’s shoes on the concrete is too loud, too sharp, the pain in his cuts are too much. He swallows thickly, “He- George wouldn’t say that.”

“You don’t have to believe me.”

The mayor stops walking for a moment, holding the coin between his index and middle finger, and traces some scrapes on the rock wall beside him with his other hand.

Dream wonders if another vampire left them there.

“I just think that...it’s pretty messed up to be talking with a human for this long...trapping him. Scaring him. *Hurting* him.” The coin flits between his fingers. “Don’t you think, Dream?”

George...George doesn’t feel that way.

He couldn’t, right?

How would I know?

Does George just go along with what I want because he’s too scared to say no? Does he think that I’ll kill him if he doesn’t pretend to be in love with me?

Does George feel that way?

Trapped?

Afraid?

“No...” Dream breathes, then growls loudly in his desperation to prove his point. “No! George cares about me! George just- he didn’t *understand*, before. I used to lie to him, but he knows who I am now. Th-that’s why I stay with him.”

Dream takes deep breaths, reeling from the harsh use of his already pained voice.

Schlatt sighs in annoyance. “Okay, Dream, I’m gonna let you in on something.”

He steps back to where Dream is still gripping the bars, determined. “I know that you’ve only been alive for a couple of decades, and have been a vampire for hardly a few years. But one thing I’ve learned in the past centuries...”

He looks up from the coin in his hand, and sternly locks eyes with Dream, his face shadowed in heavy black from above. His razor-sharp gaze cuts through the darkness in a way that nearly makes them glow.

“Vampires mistake a lot of things for connection. Something I had to learn the hard way, that I’m saving you from now, is that vampires don’t have the same soul that humans do.”

“What...what do you mean?” Dream asks, feeling an uneasy pit growing in his chest.

“I’ve thought before, too...that *I* cared about people.” Schlatt’s expression turns grim. The space between his eyebrows wrinkle. “That was the excuse I used, too, when I used to follow humans around.” His tense expression softens. “I understand what it’s like...to feel like you can have someone that would make you better. I reached for it with so many.”

Dream’s shoulders drop, heart icing over with each word the mayor speaks.

“And...every single one...” Schlatt lifts his hand to their eye level in a pinch grip. “Ended up dead because of me.”

Goosebumps crawl up the back of Dream’s neck.

His lips part, but he doesn’t speak.

Am I in the wrong?

Am I hurting George more by being with him?

Am I going to end up killing him, just like he’s saying?

The thought hurts his heart like nothing else.

“I realized after they were gone...” He closes his fist around the bronze coin. “...that while pain is the price to pay for love,” He opens his fist, and the coin is reduced to sharp bronze bits, and falls to the ground with multiple *clings*. “...being a vampire means that you lose one part of that trade.”

The pieces settle at the foot of Schlatt's black dress shoes.

The silence of the cell accompanies his heavy breaths, slowly feeling more suffocating than helpful.

The longer he lingers on the bronze shards, the more he can see it.

Bones breaking.

Tears.

The taste of blood on his tongue.

A guilty addiction, one he wouldn't be able to stop.

One he wouldn't *want* to stop.

He realizes he lost feeling in his knees when they hit the stone floor. His head falls between his shoulders.

The blood of old wounds trickle down his back.

Do I even deserve George?

Some of it was real, right?

It wasn't just my instincts?

"I know, Dream." Schlatt says softly, looking down at him. Dream doesn't look up, and screws his eyes shut. "It hurt me when I realized, too. But..." He crouches down to Dream's level, and Dream meets his eyes wearily.

“But...what?” He croaks pitifully.

“I think I can help you.”

Dream scoffs humorlessly. “How?”

Schlatt smiles with such convincing sincerity, that Dream almost wants to believe it’s real. “You could have a job with me. And I could show you. I could show you how to be happy.” His tone lowers. “How to not be in *pain* anymore.”

Dream furrows his brows skeptically. “No fucking way. I’m- I’m not *like* you. You kill people, you-”

“I’m not *asking* you to kill people, don’t put words in my mouth.” Schlatt dismisses. “What I’m proposing is that I could do all that messy stuff...” He tilts his chin up pridefully. “...and *you* just get to have *all* the human blood you could ever want, without killing a single human.”

Dream’s hands fall from the bars, his lips parting in mild shock.

I wouldn’t have to...kill?

Shame slithers through him as he salivates at the thought.

Human blood.

I could have it. And I wouldn’t have to feel bad.

He can almost smell it, the way George’s blood made him nearly kill him so many times, just because of the smell alone.

How good tasting would human blood like that be?

Then he imagines George, watching him drink human blood, watching him *take* from what once was a living human. Just like him.

He would be horrified.

He twitches at the thought, screwing his eyes shut.

No.

No...that blood would still be from people that died.

It would be no better than if I killed them myself.

What is wrong with me?

“No.” He mumbles.

“*What?*” Schlatt spits.

“I’m not *like you*. ” He growls back, standing back on his feet. “ And I never will be.”

Schlatt suddenly lurches at the bars, rattling them so loudly and with such aggression that it makes Dream fall backwards.

“Fine, then.” Schlatt hisses, chuckling lowly. “I was going to give you a choice, but I don’t need your *permission* . Let me rephrase - you *will* work for me and you *will* kill humans, and you *will* become so strong that you won’t want to turn back.”

Nausea floods Dream’s body, his eyes strain as they widen in fear.

“You can’t- I-I won’t! I’ll fight you, I’ll *kill* you!” Dream yells with all the ferocity he can muster.

Schlatt barks out a laugh. “I dunno if you’ve noticed, Dream, but fighting you is like crushing a butterfly. I’ve been killing humans *every day* for *centuries*.”

“I don’t give a shit- I-I’ll find a way, I’ll- I’ll-”

“Dream, I promise you once this is all over, you’ll be happier than ever! And you’ll never have to go hungry again. We’re going to have all the blood we want, and we won’t have to *feel bad about it* . Doesn’t that sound perfect?”

Dream wants to throw up.

The idea of being like Schlatt makes his stomach churn, a disgusted expression on his face.

“You’re disgusting.” Dream spits.

There’s something nagging at him, in the back of his mind. There’s a voice, a thought that considers Schlatt’s offer and what happiness it could bring.

What if he’s right?

Would that life be easier than this?

Have I been torturing myself for my whole life, and this is the only way to truly find happiness?

As Schlatt closes the door behind him with a clang, he’s left in a spiraling darkness of his thoughts.

Leaves crunch beneath his work boots as Sapnap makes his way down a familiar path to George's house.

He knows it by heart, feet taking the lead as his mind drifts away.

If they've detained Dream by now, George must be devastated. He thinks pensively.

I hope he won't hate my guts when I tell him.

He *just* misses seeing the blood stained dirt coming along the dirt hill to George's house, shrouded with spruce trees.

The afternoon sun bores down onto the back of his neck before being cooled under the shade of the tree canopy surrounding George's home. Ravens caw and flee at the sight of him approaching George's porch.

He knocks on the door and steps back, hands tucked into his pockets.

He huffs. *George has to deal with so much shit. Why the universe just decided he would have the most danger out of anyone else in his life will forever be a mystery to me.*

After a couple of minutes, uncertainty sprouts when there's nobody coming to the door.

That's weird, Sapnap squints in suspicion and straightens his posture. *George usually at least makes some sort of noise when I knock.*

"George?" He asks. "It's Sapnap."

He gently twists the creaky knob, to find it's unlocked. Shocked, he pushes it open and lets himself in.

"Hello?" He calls out. *Surely he doesn't have plans. Why isn't he here?*

Maybe he went out. But he never does, especially if Dream was taken away.

Unless...

What if he was with Dream? His heart lurches, pace quickening. No, surely not. What would be done with him if he was? Surely they'd just...let him go home, right?

He walks around the corner to check George's room.

The bed is unmade, which Sapnap takes note of, but George isn't in it. Neither is Dream.

He stumbles out of George's room and down the stairs.

Maybe I should go back to the mayor's office and ask about Dream. Is that too much? Am I overreacting?

I should check, right? He walks out of George's house, closing the door behind him. *I have to check.*

With heavy feet and a heavy heart, he makes his way back to the mayor's office.

Sapnap approaches the office, hand in his pockets. Coming up the steps, he feels a deep sense of dread based on something he can't quite place. Swallowing harshly, he enters the building.

Looking down the large and hollow halls of the dimly lit building, he spots Wilbur at the end of the hall, talking in hushed whispers to a shorter man in a cap.

"Mr. Soot?" Sapnap voices timidly.

The man in question turns around to face him, towering over him by nearly half a foot. “Ah, Armstrong. What brings you to the office once again?” He asks, the other walking away, dismissed from the conversation.

His look is disheveled, slightly. Sapnap notes his undone collar and messy hair.

“I...wanted to ask about my friend, George.” He swallows. “Do you know where he is?”

“I don’t believe I do.” Wilbur smiles apologetically.

Crap.

“What happened with Dream?”

“It’s been taken care of.” Wilbur says darkly, removing his glasses from his nose bridge. “It was found with Davidson near his house. It’s been detained, taken into our facility.”

Holy shit, Dream really was a vampire, then.

It wasn’t just in my head.

“What happened to George?” Sapnap narrows his eyes slightly.

“He must’ve gone home after the whole ordeal.” Wilbur replies smoothly, pinching and gently wiping the lenses of his specs using the cloth of his shirt. “Mayhaps he’s sleeping on things. I know they were close.”

He wasn’t home.

Where else would he be? George doesn’t often go places on a whim...and I doubt he’s hunting vampires after this just happened.

Sapnap fidgets with his hands, considering the options.

Maybe Dream knows where he is.

The thought of visiting Dream after being the cause of his capture isn't exactly appealing. If Dream really *is* a vampire, going to see him might just be poking a blood-thirsty bear.

But the thought of George being alone after losing someone he loved is enough to bring Sapnap to speak.

He swallows the dreadful thoughts, fear striking him hard in the chest. "Can I speak to Dream?" He nearly mumbles.

"The *vampire*? That thing is dangerous." Wilbur warns.

"I just...I want to see him."

Wilbur sighs. "You're twisting my arm, here."

"I'm sorry, sir."

"I promise you, it'll have nothing useful to say." Wilbur says dully.

"I- I know." Sapnap grimaces at the thought of someone he once considered a friend being referred to as *it*. "I just want to make sure...that he's detained...properly." He lies.

"Come this way then," Wilbur motions with his hand.

He turns and walks to the front door where Sapnap had entered, and Sapnap follows closely behind. After exiting the building, Wilbur walks down a side path that leads into a small courtyard, holding three horse wagons, each with their own two horses reined onto the wagons.

“We’ll have to take a wagon, it’s quite far.” Wilbur climbs onto the front part of the wagon, and grabs the reins of both horses. “If that’s not a problem?”

The tone of Wilbur’s voice gives Sapnap an uneasy feeling, but only pushes him to challenge back. “No, it won’t be, sir.”

He climbs up onto the wagon, sitting as close to the edge of the seat as he can. Wilbur lashes the reins, and they head down the street.

Sapnap and Wilbur dismount the wagon as they reach a rumbling stop in front of the large stone prison.

“Shouldn’t be far from here.” Wilbur says.

The two of them walk on through the large iron gates and down some mossy steps.

Sapnap lets his eyes roam his surroundings, gaze falling upon the many torches lighting up the walls and spider webs nested in the corners of the stained stone.

The room they emerge into is dirty and harshly lit, making Sapnap squint. They make it down one more dingy hall before coming upon a large cell. The level of security the dungeon takes makes him uneasy, hopes dissipating further, the further they venture into the building.

His anxious gaze falls upon the figure in the center of it, forcing a gasp from his lungs.

Dream.

Sapnap watches uneasily as the injured vampire struggles against the thick bars on the cell door. His dirtied, bloody hair falls into his eyes.

The amount of cuts on his body makes Sapnap hold back a gag. Dried blood cakes his once tan skin, smeared along his torso and calves. He steps away from the cell, unconsciously.

Dream's large hands wrap around the filthy bars, shaking them with his words.

"Sapnap," Dream rasps desperately, looking up with a petrified expression. "Sapnap, George is in danger. He- They have him, h-he's in their custody, you have to believe me *please*."

What?

"Don't listen to it." Wilbur snaps, cutting him off. "It's rambling. I didn't bring you here to chat."

"Sapnap, *please*."

"*Quiet!*" Wilbur hisses.

"They *have* him..." Dream whines quietly, shaky hands pulling away from the bars and sinking to his chest. Sapnap's heart sinks, brows furrowing.

I knew they'd detain him, but I...didn't think it would be like this.

This...

This isn't what I wanted.

"Wilbur, where is George?" He turns to Wilbur.

"Jesus, I said I *don't know*." The assistant mutters, clearly aggravated.

"But Dr-"

"It doesn't know what it's talking about! It's delusional."

“I’m telling the truth!” Dream cries. Sapnap and Wilbur both turn to face him.

“ *Shut up!* ” Wilbur snaps, slamming a fist against the wall beside the bars. Sapnap flinches at the aggression.

This isn’t the kind of treatment I was expecting.

Am I supposed to trust someone in power that acts this brash?

Sapnap looks back down at Dream, seeing the sincere look of disparity in him, and though he’s hesitant to place trust in a damn *vampire*...

The look of suffering Dream has is one of a human.

He remembers their laughter together, their easy banter, their mutual teasing of George.

Vampire or not, nobody deserves this.

With a look towards Wilbur, then back at Dream, he realizes.

Dream is telling the truth.

“ *Where* is George?” Sapnap abruptly asks, accusatory. “What did you do to him? I know you have him!”

Wilbur just sighs, chillingly apathetic. “I didn’t want to do this, Sapnap. And I wouldn’t have had to, if you’d just stayed home.”

Without warning, Wilbur shoots an arm out to grab Sapnap’s collar. The ravenette grabs his wrist without hesitation, slamming a fist into his face. Wilbur cusses at the impact.

The assistant uses his free hand to slam Sapnap's head into the wall, knocking him out in an instant. He collapses to the ground.

"No!" Dream shouts, grabbing the bars of his cell. "Sapnap, wake up!"

"Fuck off." Wilbur huffs, wiping his bloodied nose.

The doors at the end of the hall open once more, and the black haired guard from earlier, *Quackity*, comes in and halts with a mildly surprised expression at seeing a body on the ground.

"Jeez, Wilbur, we gotta keep *some* humans alive, you know." Quackity says with an eye roll as he approaches the cage.

"He's not *dead*, don't be dramatic." Wilbur dismisses. But suddenly, his eyes go to Dream, then back to Sapnap's body. "But...it would make things *easier*."

Dream's face pales.

They wouldn't kill him.

They wouldn't put Sapnap in here with me.

Quackity raises a brow, looking at Dream and then back to Wilbur. "You wanna feed it?"

"It's an effective way to get rid of witnesses, isn't it, Quackity?" Wilbur challenges back.

He grabs beneath Sapnap's arms, and begins dragging him towards the cell door.

Dream feels sick at the way his mouth starts to water. *Stop. Please.*

"Hold on." Quackity places a hand on Wilbur's shoulder, having to reach up to do so. Wilbur stops

dragging Sapnap and scowls at him.

“ *What?* ”

“The mayor had...” Quackity glances over at Dream, then lowers his voice to a rough whisper. “... *plans*, remember?”

Dream tilts his head anxiously. *Plans?*

That seems to spark a realization in the assistant, making his lips flatten into a line in contemplation.

“Hmm...I guess you’re right.” Wilbur slowly replies. “Help me carry him to a separate cell, then. We’ll figure out what to do with him later.”

When the doors slam closed again, Dream is left feeling more alone than he had before.

Sapnap was my only chance of getting out of here.

My only chance to save George.

He falls back on his side, and curls up into a ball, gritting his teeth at the growing void in his stomach.

What am I going to do?

George’s side stings as he’s thrown to the concrete floor, which leaves a couple scrapes along his right shoulder.

As if he needed any more injuries.

Schlatt and the guards had come into his cell an hour or so after his interrogation, not explaining anything and just dragging him to who-knows-where.

Apparently this is the cell Schlatt wanted him in.

He whips back up as fast as he can to rush to the cell door, but it clangs shut just before he reaches it. He grips onto the bars and meets Schlatt's eyes as he clicks the key into the lock.

"Let me OUT!" George shakes the bars back and forth as he screams, voice straining with cracks.

Schlatt glowers at him without the usual overconfident smile he bore.

"See what use your *coexistence* is now." He puts the key into his pocket and walks back down the hall without a second look back, the clicking of his shoes against the concrete growing distant as he turns the corner.

Just as George is about to yell for help again, he's interrupted by a gravelly voice behind him.

"*George?*"

George turns around in shock, not expecting to have anyone else in the cell with him.

Against the back wall, shadowed in darkness, Dream is slumped against the stone with a nauseating amount of wounds and gashes, mostly concentrated along his back and legs, blood seeping through his dress shirt, and many burn marks leaving evidence of silver that was on his skin. His hair is a mess, blood stained and falling into his eyes. Blue and purple discoloration stains his once perfect skin, leaving a foreign, horrific sight in its place.

But most frightening of all, his pupils are *completely* dilated, leaving only a tiny ring of color for an iris. He's seen the look before.

George's face drains of color.

He's hungry.

That's what Schlatt meant before he left me here.

The world freezes around him. *He wants Dream to kill me.*

He opens his mouth to say something, anything to Dream.

I should be happy, right? He's alive. Dream is alive.

And he's here with me, we're together now.

I wanted to see him.

He reassures himself, but starts to grow worried when he can't quite let the thoughts sink in. He feels like he's going to gag, a large marble stuck in his throat.

He wants to tell Dream he's sorry he is that he got them in all of this, how he can't help but feel chills on his neck at how he looks right now.

Memories of clawing, biting, splattered blood. Rushing wind and a hunter's eyes.

But this time, there's nowhere to run.

Dream seems to see all of the thoughts running through him, and staggers to his feet to rush to the bars of the cell, grabbing them with unstable, shaking fists.

George scoots back across the floor and presses himself against the wall to avoid getting close, taken aback by how ragged and quick Dream's movements were.

“YOU CAN’T LEAVE HIM IN HERE!” Dream roars down the hall.

Of course, there’s no response but an echo.

They were all already gone.

George shrinks against the wall, feeling the cell grow thick with dread, with inevitability, with apprehension.

I’m safe. George reassures himself, trying to force his body to stop shaking, and failing, taking uneven breaths.

I’m safe. It’s just Dream. Dream can control himself. We’ll be fine. It’ll be fine. He can control himself. Dream knows what to do. He can do this.

It’s going to be fine.

Dream slams a fist against the door, hard enough to make a small dent, as he shakily falls back to the ground with heaving breaths.

George feels paralyzed, unsure of what the right course of action is.

He manages a rough whisper. “...Dream?”

Dream tilts his head up, the corners of his eyes are teary. It’s an odd sight, considering how animalistic he looks at the moment.

“We have to get you out, George.” His voice is rougher than usual, evidence of the beatings he’s taken.

George’s heart throbs, he feels guilty for getting them into this mess and seeing how much Dream

still tries to protect him despite it all. Dream's stomach rumbles, both of them wince at the sound.

"I...we will." George mutters, knowing that he definitely doesn't look confident in his own answers. "You're fine, right? You can just...get *us* out, right?" He tries, giving a weak smile.

Dream's eyes fall to the ground, then he holds out his own hands in front of his face for a long stretch of silence.

George swallows harshly. *He doesn't know.*

"George..." Dream whispers, voice falling slightly into a growl. "I...I can't see much. My head is killing me- it feels like my whole body is yelling at me, and I-" He groans in frustration, raking his hands through his bloodied hair roughly. "I'm so...they- they hurt me, so *bad*. It *hurts*, George." Dream squeezes his eyes shut, gritting his teeth, fangs bared as he speaks.

Maybe they were right. George realizes, chest pitting with pity and guilt. *He won't be able to resist.*

They knew our connection would be nothing if he's hungry enough.

George looks down at his own body, realizing how much he was bleeding. *The smell must be driving him crazy. He needs my blood to survive, too. He's injured.*

George steps up onto one foot, then the second with strained muscles. *No. I'm not letting this happen.*

He takes bold steps over to the other side of the cell, and bends down next to where Dream is sitting, nearly falling over at a sharp pain in his leg from an earlier wound, but keeping balance.

"I'm sorry. I know it hurts, Dream, but we're getting out. C'mon." He says stubbornly, placing a hand on the vampire's shoulder. "It's gonna be oka-"

He gasps as Dream suddenly grabs his wrist and stands, nearly causing George to fall backwards if it wasn't for the tight grip on his arm.

His breath catches as Dream holds his hand a few inches from his face, staring at it with pinpointed intensity, a look so sharp it could make the bravest men cower in fear.

Unmoving, Dream mutters, "There's a cut on your palm." The words are spoken with no emotion, blank. He stated it as a fact.

George feels trepidation trickle down his spine, but he refuses to try and fight Dream's grasp. So instead, he forces himself to be calm. "There is," He agrees, voice shaking slightly. "...Dream...just calm down, okay?"

"I forgot how good it smells." Dream mumbles, eyes still fixed on the bleeding wound, bringing George's hand slightly closer. He licks his lips.

George's breath hitches.

Dream grips his wrist slightly tighter. "And it's...all over you."

George tries to pull his hand away just a little, but notices that his movements do nothing to help him back away.

His eyes dart over Dream's features, heart beating wildly in his chest. *Why am I afraid? He won't hurt me, will he? He's changed now, he's changed enough, right?*

"Dream." He says, stern this time. With an uncertain hope, he uses his other hand to reach up to Dream's face, brushing some hair behind his ear, then cradling his jaw.

Dream's eyes haven't left his palm.

"*Dream.*" George pleads, brushing his knuckles over Dream's cheek.

Finally, Dream's small pupils flit over to meet his own.

“Let go.” He says firmly, looking into Dream’s eyes with all the sincerity he can manage.

There’s a long pause. The look in the vampire’s eyes starts to unsettle him after a moment, until Dream blinks.

He looks at George’s palm, then back to his face, and blinks again.

He lets go, then abruptly starts backing away with quick breaths. George’s hand feels cold where it met Dream’s face.

George sighs with relief.

“*Sorry*. George, I’m so sorry.” Dream whispers shakily, hands hovering at his sides as if he doesn’t know what to do with them. “Please, just...just- I can’t-” He sputters, backing himself against the wall of the cell. “I don’t know if I can do this. I can’t do this, I can’t, I *can’t*-”

“Dream, please, take a breath.” George says, worriedly.

“I’m so sorry for scaring you.” Dream gasps. “You- I’m sorry for what I’ve done...I’m terrible. I- I’m terrible. I’m so terri-”

“*Dream*, please.” George begs, “It’ll- it’ll be okay. We’ll be okay.”

“No...” Dream groans, his hands buried and tugging harshly in his hair. “George you don’t *understand*, it’s going to get worse, and there’s no way out- and I’m going to *lose myself* whether I-”

George takes a few steps towards Dream. “*Stop*, we’re going to get out.”

When George reaches for Dream’s face again, Dream suddenly lurches forward, and grabs George by the collar of his shirt.

George yelps, grabbing at Dream’s arms desperately and attempting to lean back.

“Dream?” George breathes, wincing at the strain on his neck against his shirt fabric. Dre- just- calm down, okay? Alright?”

“ *I want it so bad...* ” Dream growls. He audibly smells a cut on George’s neck, making the human shudder in fear. “ *...smells so good, George.* ”

“Dream, seriously-” George frantically clambers at Dream’s grip as he’s slowly lifted off the ground. “I- put me down, put me *down please!* ”

Is he actually going to kill me?

In a last effort of hope, he says, “Please, I- I know you can resist it. I...I love you.”

The breathing on his neck suddenly shallows, and after a moment of suffocating silence, Dream harshly shoves George to the other side of the cell.

“ *Fuck.* ” Dream breathes raggedly, regaining his senses enough to realize how scared George was. Dream paces back and forth on his side of the cell, his hands in tight fists and eyes clenched tight. “Fuck, this is bad, this is *so bad*, I’m gonna kill you. I’m gonna kill you, and it’s gonna be all my fault, and you’ll be *dead* and I-”

George swallows. He manages to say in a low voice, “No, you’re *not.* ”

George has pushed himself against the wall, watching his partner with a weary gaze.

He wants to convince himself he’s not afraid, and that he doesn’t believe what they say about Dream’s animalistic instincts, but memories of the forest convince him otherwise.

Memories of Dream snapping a tree trunk with his bare fists, memories of him dilating his pupils on passing rabbits that were dead mere moments after he spotted them.

Memories of Dream sinking his fangs into Techno’s neck and draining the color from his body to

leave it pale and lifeless.

Just now, the ghost of Dream's grasp lingers on his wrist, too strong to pull away from.

The strong grip of his large hands, even in this weak of a state, are too strong for George to escape.

"I'm sorry George.. I'm trying. I-I'm just so *so* hungry.." Dream rasps, lowering his gaze.

George moves a hand to his own neck, pressing his palm to it and feeling his pounding pulse.

He can't help but imagine Dream throwing him around like a ragdoll, tearing into his skin slowly to rip screams from his throat, then mercilessly feasting on his blood while he thrashes for an escape.

George's hands are visibly shaking.

He's not going to hurt me. He loves me. More than anything.

He loves me.

We'll be okay.

We have to be.

But he still finds himself unsure of whether he can trust Dream to manage his hunger over his love. He sighs shakily, moving his hand down his neck.

George flinches when Dream moves again, suddenly curling up into a ball and turning into a bat, a small puff of smoke filling the air when he does. He looks at the bat with hopeful eyes as Dream dashes towards the bars of the cell.

He hits the bars but as soon as he tries to squeeze between, he can't. They're too close together. The wounds on Dream's human form were also evident in his bat form, making it clearly painful to fly, especially with the added energy it required for him to transform. George winces. His energy only drains more once he's turned human again.

"No..." Dream croaks, voice sorrowful and raw. He curls up against the wall.

George sits still for a moment before he crawls over to Dream and sits against the wall.

"Get away from me." Dream mutters brokenly. "I'm gonna...I'm gonna hurt you."

"Wait," George says shakily, and raises a tentative hand. "...let me try this again."

Dream's whole body twitches when George's knuckles tenderly brush over his cheek. But after a moment, Dream's body untenses.

"You shouldn't..." Dream mumbles raspily. His eyes flutter shut, but a weak hand tries to feignedly swipe George's fingers away. "Being close is...bad."

George pushes Dream's hand back down, and brushes his fingers up to Dream's temple, and into the roots of his grimy hair.

"It stopped you, though." George says, half to himself. "Maybe...you just need to be reminded of your human part. To stay present."

Dream scoffs, then coughs. "That's ridiculous."

"It's working, though." George points out, trailing his fingernails gently over Dream's scalp. Dream exhales, and leans into the touch more.

Dream hums bittersweetly. "Okay...it does *help*."

"Yeah." George sighs. "Just move if you get too tempted."

Dream huffs, void of humor. "It's impossible for me to *not* be tempted with the way you smell right now."

"You know what I mean." George replies, flattening his palm against the back of Dream's head, cradling it. "I just...I want to be able to help. I can't just...watch you destroy yourself like this."

"But...we're going to...we're going to *die* here. I could kill you, and-"

"Then I don't want to spend my last moments living in fear of you." George replies firmly. His expression softens, his hand traces the outline of Dream's ear. "I...I want to be here for you. I want to be a part of your life, Dream."

George sees another tear roll down Dream's cheek. "You were." He whispers.

"*I am* ." George corrects. "It isn't over. I'm still right here."

Dream opens his eyes just enough to look over at him, and though his pupils are in such an animalistic state, George can see the pure concern in them. "Yeah. You are." Dream manages a weak smile.

George's heart sinks at the gentleness in such dangerous eyes.

Why did the world decide to make him a vampire, out of all people?

"I'm sorry." George whispers.

"Why are *you* sorry?" Dream mumbles.

"I'm sorry you're hurt. And I'm sorry I got us into trouble. You don't deserve to be in this pain...and you wouldn't be, if I didn't get involved."

Dream shook his head. "No," he murmurs into George's chest. "No, this isn't your fault."

George can't help the guilt swelling in his chest, knowing Dream blames himself. "It isn't yours either."

"It is. I-It's my fault, but.." Dream says quietly, then gently clasps their hands together. "At least I get to die with you. S-Spend our last moments together, right?"

George's heart swells. Fear dissipating, he continues to comb through the blond hair, holding Dream's head against his chest. He closes his eyes and sighs.

The only thing he thinks to regret is getting caught. But it almost seems worth it when he thinks back to the time they've spent together, side by side, hand in hand, lips on lips.

Heart to heart.

Suddenly, an idea strikes him. George's eyes shoot open.

"We don't have to die."

Nature vs. Nurture

Chapter Summary

omg sorry for the wait i was on vacation LMAO leave comments if you want i love the support !!!

promoting the discord server again (its super chill and we play games n stuff !)
<https://discord.gg/FxCTxAfFJe>

Warnings for chapter 17: graphic violence, swearing, blood

enjoy :D

Suddenly, an idea strikes him. George's eyes shoot open.

"We don't have to die."

Dream lifts his head and stares into George's eyes. "What?"

"Okay, listen..." George prefaces, before taking a deep breath and making eye contact with Dream.

"I...I want you to bite me."

Dream's eyes widen in horror, but before he can refute, George continues hastily.

"Just- hear me out. You've gotten a *lot better* at controlling yourself, so..." George sighs. "...I want you to take some of my blood. But, just enough to- to get us out."

Dream sighs defeatedly. "George. No."

"You-You *have* to. That's the only way!"

“I’m *not* going to bite you.” Dream reaffirms, now leaning away from George’s touch. He immediately pulls the receding hand back into his lap. “I’d rather starve than- than risk fucking killing you! You *know* how- how unstable I am!”

“What choice do we *have*?” George’s cries drip with helplessness. “I refuse to accept that we’re just going to *die here* and that we can’t do anything about it. Not after...” He trails off, and looks at his lap. “...not after I *finally* found happiness with you.”

“George...”

“Look.” George resolves, looking back up. “I don’t really want to risk this either, but...I *trust you* , Dream.”

“I know but- but-”

Dream stumbles over his words in his frustration.

Frustrations with how *fucked* they are, how none of this would have happened if he’d just kept his distance from the start of all of this, how he doesn’t want to decide anything because all of the options end in something awful.

“I don’t trust *myself*, George!” He finally sobs out, feeling tears prick at his eyes. “The whole reason we’re here- the whole reason that you’re hurt right n-now- it’s because I’m fucking *stupid* and I can’t fucking control myself-”

“Hey, hey.” George says softly.

Dream stops talking, holding back from saying over and over how *sorry* he is and how he never deserved George’s trust in the first place.

Or how he never deserved George at all.

George reaches out to Dream’s hand, and locks his index finger loosely with Dream’s. Though he flinches, Dream accepts the touch.

Even in a shitty, dark cell that smells like blood, George is still looking out for him.

“Breathe.”

Dream hardly finds it in himself to try and stop his frantic breaths but he manages, feeling his ribs shake with each pound of his panicked heart.

“If you won’t drink my blood, then you can...you can turn me.” George explains. “Then my blood won’t be as tempting to you and- and then *I’ll* be able to get us out.”

Dream grimaces, mind rapidly running through every awful thing about being a vampire.

“What the *fuck*? No- wha- George you *hate* vampires!”

“I’d be alive, wouldn’t I? At least I- we could...” George’s eyes look distant. “...we’d at least have each other, right..? It’d be worth all the...the awful stuff, I think. If we both made it out of here.”

Though the words make Dream’s heart warm with fondness, it also spreads a deep sorrow within him.

“Okay, *no*. Firstly, I don’t exactly want you to be stuck drinking blood and hiding from the sun for eternity. You... *hate* vampires.” He pauses, smiling weakly. “Well, most.”

George attempts to smile back. “Most.”

“But secondly, that also wouldn’t do anything to help us now, unfortunately...”

“What? Why?” George asks.

“Turning wouldn’t get rid of your wounds...you’d be just as weak as me. And maybe hungrier, too.”

“Oh...” George mutters. “And I guess if they plan to leave us in here until you’re...dead...then we’ll eventually get too hungry for it to matter, anyways.”

Dream sighs grimly. “Exactly. We’d just turn on each other anyways after long enough. But... *biting you?*”

George shrugs hopelessly, sinking against the wall. “That seems like...well, the only option we *have*, Dream.”

Dream rubs his eyelids. “I-I don’t think- George, I’ve never *had* human blood, I have no clue what to expect. This isn’t like us just- just *holding hands* and shit like that.”

I couldn’t live with myself if I killed you. Dream laments. *I don’t know how I could be worthy of anything good again.*

Before George can respond, Dream pulls the human’s trembling hands away from his eyes and speaks. “I can’t. I can’t bite you.”

“Dream, *please*. ” George begs, planting his hands on Dream’s shoulders. The vampire doesn’t try to push him away.

“I-I can’t. I won’t.” Dream shakes his head weakly. “You can’t make me. You- You *can’t* .”

George shakes him slightly, desperation seeping into his voice. “It’s the *only way!* ”

“I promised I wouldn’t *hurt* you again, George!” Dream cries suddenly, voice cracking. Hysteria takes over once again, leaving his chest aching.

“We don’t have a choice! Do it for *us* !”

“ *Stop* . There has to be another way,” Dream pleads. “I won’t...I won’t be able to control myself.”

“There isn’t. There isn’t another way.” George says. “You have to do this for us. Please.” His voice softens, eyebrows furrowing further. “I’m going to be okay...please, do it for us.”

“We don’t *know* that.” Dream says quietly. “This is...this is what they want.”

“Listen, Dream.” George says, voice smooth like honey. He plucks his hands off Dream’s injured shoulders and slips his hands into his. “They want you to *kill* me. You aren’t going to do that. This is the only option we have, and if we don’t do this, there is no chance to escape. And if we don’t escape, we *will die*. This is our only shot. I’m begging you, Dream.”

Dream closes his eyes, momentarily allowing himself to cave into the idea. The rich smell of blood makes his mouth water, only making him more anxious.

He opens his eyes, turning his head to look down at George sitting next to him, and allows himself to think about what it would be like to bite him.

The moment he merely considers it, there’s a surgance of pure, unfiltered thirst that rushes to the forefront of his mind, his eyes going foggy at the thought of so many things that his instincts consider wonderful given the option of biting a human.

Teeth in George’s neck, terrifying and intoxicating.

Blood enriching his taste buds, how satisfying would it feel? To have access to the best smelling blood he’s ever encountered, and been forced to smell for the past countless weeks, what could *possibly* compare to such a natural, fulfilled desire?

He then remembers who he’s thinking of.

A shoulder to cry on, a comfort and home undeservingly provided to him time and time again.

Realizing his arms began twitching since he had looked over at George, he snaps his eyes away again, hastily shutting them tight.

“Nope- n-no, no, no I’m *not*- I can’t do this. I can’t.” Dream babbles out in a panic.

George doesn't respond for a few moments as Dream rakes his hand through his already damaged hair.

Should I tell him how unstable the mere thought of biting him makes me? Could he help calm me down?

Dream immediately retreats from the idea. *Maybe that wouldn't exactly be the most comforting thing to hear for him right now. If I'm going to have to bite him, I don't want him freaking out more than he has to, at least.*

Eventually, George speaks. "Dream...I..." He stops himself.

Dream opens his eyes warily, turning to look at him with curiosity.

"W-What? What is it?"

"Dream, I..." He takes a deep breath. "I want...a future. With you. And the only way that...that we could m-maybe have that is i-if we survive...this." His face grows a little more red as he talks, though it's hard to tell in the darkness of the cell.

A bit of weight is lifted from Dream's body. *A future.*

George sees a future.

With me.

"A future." Dream says quietly to himself, liking the fuzzy feeling it leaves in his ribcage.

"Yes." George reaffirms, and rests his palm over Dream's, which was hovering by his face. "But to get there...we have to do this."

He entertains the idea. He feels the wind on his face from when they'll be sitting in one of his

treehouses, watching the sun disappear from the shade of the planks above. The air is sweet smelling, flickering lanterns swinging above their heads, dimly illuminating their intertwined hands. Flowers blooming in a handmade flower pot, nourished and alive. Thriving, just as their relationship does the same. Maybe Dream's grown comfortable enough to share his written stories, and they're reading them together.

Dream takes a long, deep breath.

"For us..?"

"For us."

Minutes pass.

Finally, Dream mutters out, "Okay."

George sits up some. "Okay..?"

"Okay." Dream settles, dropping his hands to the ground. "I'll do it."

"Yeah?" George smiles, seeming to be just as anxious as Dream is. He *is* the one getting bitten, after all. "Alright...alright."

For us. Dream reminds himself when he hears the slight fear under George's tone. *This is for us.*

"Now's as good a time as any, right?" Dream jokes, finally.

"Yeah," George swallows uneasily. "Yeah."

The vampire's mind goes to less than pleasant places, thinking of all that could go wrong in a matter of minutes.

Minutes from now, he could be dead.

What if this is the end of us?

Dream shifts to sit in front of George on his knees, sinking into his shoulders some in an attempt to seem less intimidating over George's smaller, sitting figure.

"So...what happens when I'm bitten? I won't turn, right?"

"You won't." Dream reassures him. "We- um, vampires have hollow teeth and we can choose to insert the venom inside or not, which will turn or not turn the person we bite."

George nods uneasily. "Alright...alright, I'll be fine."

Dream takes a final minute to take deep breaths, running his worn hands on his partner's shoulder. He feels the tension in the other's collarbone, so he quietly tells George to settle so it hurts less. He does his best to comply, shoulders softening slightly.

He reaches down to grab George's hand once more.

In case it's the last time I get to.

"I...You *know* I love you, right George?" Dream asks breathlessly, hyper aware of where his hand touches George's softer, smaller one.

George swallows, stomach churning. "I know."

"Just...remember that." Dream says quietly.

He pulls George flush against his chest in a tight hug, though it happens a little more aggressively than he intended to do. He takes in the scent of fresh blood on his partner's paper-pale skin, inside his bones, with a deep inhale. He pulls the collar of his shirt down to reveal a stretch of skin along his collar and neck.

He leans down and closes his eyes, intoxicated by the scent.

“This...this is gonna hurt, George.” Dream murmurs, lips brushing against George’s skin.

“Then we better get it over with, right?” George smiles nervously.

Dream runs a gentle, apologetic hand along the side of George’s face, then resting it on his scarred shoulder. He feels George’s chest rise and fall with each trepid breath.

Dream takes a deep breath, bares his fangs, and *finally* bites into the flesh of George’s neck.

George resists the urge to scream, clamping a hand over his mouth. It felt similar to the feeling of getting a shot, except the needles were *huge*. He suddenly becomes very aware of the heartbeat in his throat as the teeth slowly sink into his flesh.

George feels his blood begin to drain, and he struggles to keep his eyes open as his lightheadedness drowns his vision. He allows them to flutter shut, letting out a soft, strained breath.

The taste of George’s blood is unlike any animal Dream has ever had.

It isn’t just sweet, like other vampires had said, it’s downright *heavenly*, if there was blood that came from the gods themselves, this has to be it.

Savory. Delectable.

Incredible.

The flavor begins to completely overwhelm him, maybe it’s just the fact that it’s *George* and of course he would have the best blood in the whole world, but holy *shit* he didn’t expect it to be this fucking *amazing* .

While Techno's blood was significantly better tasting than woodland animals, the taste of George's blood is on a completely different level. Other-wordly, sweet, delicious.

Human.

Just a little, Dream reminds himself.

But as his hunger surges through him, instincts push him to bite harder and drink as much as possible. He feels his skin crawl, addiction beginning to take control of his body and sinking into his flesh and bones.

He pierces his teeth in deep, and sucks, turning and pushing George to the ground by his shoulders harshly, hands gripping his upper arms and pinning them to the cell floor.

Dream's body is no longer his, it moves without his knowledge and all memories of his life are lost and replaced with the urge to consume, more, more, and more. It was *incredible*, God, he can't get enough. He doesn't *want* to get enough.

His thoughts are shattered when he hears a choked out sob.

Dream stops, and his gaze snaps back into clear focus.

He finally regains control of his body and pulls away with ragged breaths, reeling from the loss of the intense taste.

He licks the blood off his lips and teeth, staring at the damage he'd done.

There are two large puncture wounds left in George's lower neck, who shakily places a hand over the gushing wound.

"*Fuck* , oh fuck- are you okay? I'm so sorry, this was a horrible idea. I'm so-" Dream clasps a hand over his mouth, more ashamed of his teeth than he ever had been.

“I-I’m okay!” George says breathlessly, looking up. His eyes are glassy with tears but he smiles a bit, hope seeping through the cracks of their despair at last. “It’s.. It’s okay, don’t worry. Do you feel better?”

Dream looks down at himself. He does look noticeably healthier, skin returning to its natural color.

He feels stronger, the blood runs through his body like adrenaline, and suddenly all senses of exhaustion and pain are purged from his body.

He feels physically better than he ever has in his life.

“Y-yeah...I do, but- oh my god-” Dream winces as blood creeps out over George’s fingers, attempting to keep the crimson in. “You’re... *fuck*, I-I’m sorry, I’m sorry, George, I’m so sorry-”

“Stop...” George waves his free hand and smiles at him. “I’m serious, I’m fine, I’m fine, just get us out, now, maybe?”

Dream notices the evident urgency behind his understanding tone. The red hasn’t stopped flowing over George’s fingers, making Dream’s heart clench with remorse.

“Yeah, yeah, of course, right.”

His legs straighten with ease as he stands, a stark contrast to how crippled he had felt moments ago.

The new blood was still running through his body, the rush in his ribcage begging to be used through physical force, basically filling his entire presence with an aura of raw energy.

He offers what tries to be a gentle hand to help George to his feet.

He doesn’t look well. Dream thinks as George’s jittery hand takes his, guilt rushing through his body like a flash flood. *He could die of blood loss if we don’t get out of here soon.*

For a moment, George leans into Dream's chest. His shaky fingers clasp at the taller's chest, resting over his uneven heart beat.

Dream doesn't want the human near him, in fear of tearing him open, but the shallow breaths and quiet sniffles against his chest make him think otherwise. He gently wraps his hands around the shivering brunet, shocked that George still wants comfort from him after what just happened.

George pulls away after a few, quiet moments.

"Thank you, Dream." He whispers. "Now...now we're gonna be fine."

Dream kisses the top of his head chastely, hoping George can feel his apology in it's gentleness. "You did so good."

"My head is all..." George huffs weakly, a nervous grin pulling at the corners of his lips. "...it's so fuzzy...my neck is all n-numb."

"Okay, okay, um-"

Dream slightly panics, knowing that George was probably going to pass out or *worse* if he doesn't get them out and heal him soon. Even with only two deep puncture wounds, those on top of his already overwhelming amount of injuries would surely catch up to him quickly.

He carefully steps away from George and towards the cell's bars. "Just stay back for a sec, okay? Y-You're gonna be fine. I'm gonna get us out."

George nods, trying to be enthusiastic.

Dream turns to the bars, gripping them with newly strengthened hands and fresh blood coursing through his veins.

With a forced confidence, he closes his fingers tight around the titanium and just barely pulls them

back towards his chest. His breath stutters when the steel already bends from the miniscule pull, and can feel George's eyes on him in a stunned silence as well.

Curiously, he pulls *hard*, and both of the bars crumble at their bases in the floor and ceiling immediately, causing both Dream and George to stumble back in shock as rubble falls to the floor loudly, and dark, barely moonlit dust flying from the mild destruction.

"Holy shit." George mutters breathlessly. Dream turns to face him, seeing shocked pupils and parted lips, the human forgetting his pain if only for a brief moment.

And to Dream's relief, there's no fear in George's eyes.

Nothing but trust.

Nothing but adoration.

The ruckus was definitely heard by some people upstairs, meaning they had to get out fast and *soon* if they didn't want to both end up dead anyways.

Dream steps through floating dust and thick air to meet George's trembling hand with his own secure grip, the scarlet running down George's neck growing more and more alluring the closer Dream got.

Slim fingers and monstrous power, shaky breath and a mind of regrets, a trickle of blood down pale skin and newfound promises, Dream doesn't *care* if he and George aren't meant to exist together like this.

No matter what, we're going to.

And if Dream can help it, George will *never* feel helpless again.

"Can you walk okay?" Dream asks, stepping back.

“Yeah, yeah I can.” George assures, and takes a couple of easy steps in display, his walking appearing normal enough, despite the concerning amount of crimson staining his skin.

“Okay, just stay behind me, alright? I don’t need you getting hurt anymore.”

George scoffs. “What? No, I’m helping.”

“*Hell. No.*” Dream says firmly. “You’re in no state to be fighting, George. I’m pretty sure I can take the guards myself.” He gestures to the disfigured steel bars laying on the prison floor.

“I think you forget that I actually have more fighting experience than you.” George rolls his eyes, smiling slightly.

It’s nice to see him smile again.

“If I can handle vampires, I’m pretty sure I can handle my own kind, idiot.”

“I know that, but,” Dream grimaces at the thought of George getting wounded again. “You’re not, like, in the middle of *dying* when you fight, usually.”

George groans. “I’m not even that in pain, really. If it’ll convince you, then you have my full permission to protect me all you want in case I get cornered or something.”

Dream narrows his eyes, stepping out of the cell through the opening he made. “Fine. But...only because I love you.”

George smiles, stepping out of the cell with him. “Sure, sure. So what’s the plan?”

“We’re going to find Sapnap, then get you out of here as fast as possible.”

George’s expression turns to confusion, then panic. “*What?* Wait, what happened to Sapnap? I-Is he okay?”

“Oh- yeah, yeah I-I think so.” Dream reassures George hurriedly, not wanting him to worry. “He just came by before you got put in my cell...I think he was looking for you. But then he saw me, and I told him what happened, and he tried to fight them...and they knocked him out. I think they took him to another cell.”

“Of course the stubborn idiot would try to save me.” George sighs. “Okay...okay, we have to get him out, too.”

“Alright, we just have to be fast, okay?”

George tries to nod, but inhales sharply, a pained expression appearing on his face. He rests his palm against his neck. Dream’s gaze softens, world slowing suddenly.

“Actually,” He corrects. “We’re...we’re going to take you home, get you treated, and I’ll come back for him.”

“No! Dream, he’s my *best friend*, I want to help! You...you can’t afford to come back here.” George pleads.

“And you can’t afford to stay! You’re going to *bleed out*.” Dream turns to face him. “We-We need to make this decision *now*, before they realize we’ve broken out.”

“Dream...please. I’m tired of feeling useless.” George crosses his arms across his chest protectively. “He’s done so much for me. He came back just to find you...I-I need to be there when we get him out. I need him to be *okay*.”

Dream swallows, Adam's apple moving along his throat slowly. “I...we don’t even know where he is, George.” He eyes George’s neck, which has bled enough to start staining his shirt and darkening his neck with the red liquid.

“Please,” George looks up at him sorrowfully. “We can find him. We have to, Dream.”

Dream pinches the bridge of his nose, and sighs. “Fine. We’ll go find him together. *Quickly*.”

George uncrosses his arms and sighs, air rushing out of his lungs in relief. “Thank you, Dream.”

The doors at the top of the stairs down the hall suddenly burst open. A guard with a rather built stature, brown hair and bronze armor stomps down the steps, groaning loudly before yelling, “Keep it down!”

He looks up from the steps once he’s at the bottom, eyes opening wide in shock.

Shit. Dream instinctively takes a step towards George, putting an arm in front of his chest.

“They’re out!” The guard hollers, and begins running towards them and drawing a wooden stake out from the holster on his back.

Dream growls lowly, stepping forwards despite George’s disagreements behind him. The guard holds the stake with two hands, raising it and preparing to stab down as he quickly approaches.

Dream ducks quickly, and grabs the guard by his chestplate, lifting him off the ground with terrifying ease, and throwing him against the dingy prison walls with a clang.

The guard slides to the ground, eyes closed and crumpling to the ground.

“Jesus.” George comments behind him quietly, laughing a little. “I-I think you got him, Dream.”

Before Dream can respond, he’s interrupted by the sound of distant yelled-out commands and storming footsteps.

He grabs George’s hand, and begins running down the hall. “We have to go. *Now.*”

“There’s- There’s guards this way, though!”

“We’re in the basement, it’s the only exit! We’re gonna have to fight our way out.” Dream yells as

they plow forward and approach the staircase, stopping for a moment upon looking up to hear a group of guards' footsteps quickly approaching.

"Stop!" One of them yells, the sound of metal boots echoing through the hall.

Dream drops George's hand, hesitating slightly before opting to charge up the stairs rather than waiting for them to come to him.

Almost as soon as they reach the top of the steps, a hoard of guards is pouring out of the side hallway and charging towards them.

He grabs the front-most guard by their arm, forcing the silver blade in their grasp to drop to the ground with how tightly he grips. He doesn't bother to waste more time fighting the one guard off, pushing past them with a harsh shove to the ground and leaving the officer sprawled on the ground.

He prepares to take on the next guard, but is mildly surprised when seeing the sheer amount of officers. Even with his extra strength, dealing with them all wasn't going to be easy.

"Make this easy for yourself." One of the guards threatens in a remarkably deep and raspy voice. "Nobody else has to get hurt, vampire."

Dream groans in frustration. *This is gonna take forever. I have to get him out now.*

In his frustration, he charges forwards and pushes a guard backwards as hard as he can, causing multiple others to fall over. A couple yell more commands, and he's suddenly grabbed by his arms on either side, and he sees a flash of another silver blade.

He grabs both of the officers by their arms in a lock grip, and whirls around to throw them full force into the quickly dwindling amount of guards, eliciting multiple groans of pain from the group.

Looking down at the amount of either unconscious or heavily injured officers on the ground, Dream looks back at George, who was simply watching from the top of the staircase with wide eyes and parted lips. Dream internally grimaces at the stunned look on George's face.

“There’s more cells down there.” Dream gestures beyond the guards while he has a moment to speak, not able to take a moment to reassure George before he turns around again and is immediately met with another wooden stake, which he just barely stops from plunging into his chest, and tossing it to the side. “Sapnap has to be in one of them, we just need to-” He dodges another punch. “We need to find out which one.”

George blinks, and shakes his head, finally seeming to come back to his senses.

He runs up next to Dream, and kicks the knees of a second approaching guard, forcing him to his knees and locking an arm around his neck in a chokehold before elbowing him hard enough to render the guard unconscious before he can reach back for a blade.

When he looks up again, Dream is watching with mild shock. “You really can fight, huh?” Dream chuckles, and grabs the guard attacking him by their arm and pinning them to the floor all too easily.

“Of course.” George says with an eye roll and a weak grin.

After Dream kicks the guard on the ground hard enough to render him immobile, he turns back around to see George taking the only two guards by himself, ducking expertly under the swings of their blades and locking one of the officers’ arms behind his back.

Dream runs over, tackling the guard that was preparing to attack George, forcing him to the ground.

“Okay! Okay, I surrender, s-stop!” The guard pleads rapidly, covering his face with both armored arms. “Just d-don’t knock me out, please?”

Dream huffs a low growl, considering ignoring the request, but relents. He grabs the guard by his chest piece and shoves him away, glaring down at him as he stands. “Fine. Just...stay over there. And don’t fucking move.”

When he turns back around to face George, the brunet still has the other curly, brown haired guard in a choke hold, but has taken the silver blade from him and is holding it against the officer’s throat.

“We need to know where Sapnap is.” George demands, holding the blade a little closer to the man’s neck.

“I-” The guard coughs. “I don’t know where he is.” He rasps out.

Dream eyes the blood that has continued slowly trickling down George’s neck, noticing how his hands were starting to shake a little.

He’s getting even more light headed already. We don’t have a lot of time.

Dream paces forward suddenly, and grabs the officer out of George’s grip and pulls him upwards.

The man yelps, shoved against the wall, the tips of his shoes barely managing to reach the concrete floor with how high he’s been pushed into the air.

“You’re going to tell me where they’re keeping Sapnap, or you’re not going to get it as easy as your friends.” Dream growls, pushing him further up the wall.

“O-Okay I’ll tell you! He’s in cell C418!” He says shakily. “I-It’s to the left down t-the stairs!”

Dream drops him, landing the guard on his hands and knees. He gasps, arms shakily pulling him to his feet.

“Come on,” Dream grabs George’s arm and pulls him away from the scene, down the cell-lined hall and down a separate flight of stairs from the one they emerged from.

On the way down, they pass many guards who try to stop them through force and weaponry.

Dream grabbed one by the upper arm, slamming him against the nearest wall. The man’s blade falls out of his hand.

Just as Dream lets his grip loosen, figuring that the guard would be too injured to fight back more, the guard whips around under Dream’s grip and kicks him in the stomach.

Dream doesn't even blink, looking down at the guard's leg then back up to make eye contact in a silent threat.

The guard's breath hitches when seeing the lack of effect in his fighting. "Wait-"

In a moment of frustration, Dream pushes the guard against the wall again, and roughly sinks his teeth into his neck.

And there it is again.

That taste. That feeling.

The taste of human blood is everything Dream doesn't want it to be.

It feels exhilarating.

Empowering.

Dream blinks, hardly hearing the guard's pleas for mercy over the pounding of his heart in his ears.

And with the crimson on his tongue, that perfect taste, a thought suddenly enters Dream's mind.

I could kill them all if I wanted to.

In shock from the quick thought, Dream pushes himself off of the guard haphazardly in an attempt to regain control of his thoughts.

The thought of control, though, seemed...unappealing somehow.

The guard was still alive, but was now falling against the wall and desperately pushing on the fang marks to stop the bleeding, gasping and hissing at the deep gushing wound.

Dream would normally feel a kind of remorse for injuring someone to that degree.

But seeing the scarlet liquid spilling over the guard's calloused hands and dark gloves, self control becomes the farthest thing from his mind.

I may be a vampire, but at least I chose to fight against my instincts.

Carnalistic impulses begin to creep over Dream's body, consuming his waking behavior.

These people choose to do evil.

He turns around, seeing George holding a guard against a desk outside a cell by his wrists, pushing down on the guard's back and struggling to keep him restrained while fighting off another officer behind him, using a dagger he had presumably stolen.

When Dream sees the unrestrained officer push George to the ground, he can feel his whole existence, his entire body begging for violence.

The carmine liquid staining Dream's teeth makes a convincing argument, the argument that these people deserve to *suffer* for what they've done.

These people choose to hurt those who have done nothing wrong.

How come they deserve mercy, when I spend every minute of my existence trying to right my wrongs, and still remain a vampire?

Though he recognizes the recklessness of his behavior at the moment, each beat of his heart becomes fueled by human blood, and begins to dissociate his soul from his body.

The source of evil is not circumstance. I didn't choose to be a vampire.

But they chose to hurt me and George.

He charges forwards.

They deserve to suffer. His thoughts rationalize his actions. *They've probably ruined so many lives other than me and George's.*

Who's to say they don't deserve the same?

In a blur, Dream lunges at the guard raising a dagger above George, who was covering his face with his arms in a desperate attempt to shield himself. Dream takes the guard in both his hands, ripping him away from George and feels the guard's armor bend under his fingers as he throws him to the ground with a loud clang.

The guard's groaning and agonized cries fall on deaf ears as Dream paces forwards.

I won't let them push me down anymore.

Dream pulls the guard back up off of the ground by his chestplate, and shoves him against the wall with enough force to make another clang.

This must be what other vampires feel like.

He pulls the guard forwards, and slams him against the wall again. The guard's head falls forwards in defeat.

I'm never letting anyone take this feeling from me again.

Again.

I'll show them what I'm really capable of.

Again.

I don't care how many people I have to kill.

“Watch out!”

Dream finally drops the guard in his grip, turning around to narrowly dodge a wooden stake aimed for his chest, breath hitching as it hits the wall instead.

George locks an arm around the aggressor's neck, pulling him back and ripping the stake out of his grip and tossing it to the ground and stomping on it, snapping the piece of wood in half.

Dream realizes that he was forgetting to breathe before George had called out for him.

He also realizes that his vision is getting foggy, almost feeling as if the blood in his system is acting as a drug, one that doesn't care about anything except for more *power* and to kill any fucker that even *thinks* that they can push him down.

He doesn't even realize when George had already finished dealing with the other guard, and was now shaking him back and forth by his tattered shirt.

“Dream! Are you listening?”

“Fuck-” Dream gasps, finally snapping back into focus. “George...right, thank God you're okay...” He blinks hard, struggling to steady his breathing and to listen to George.

“Yes, but,” George looks up at him with deep concern. “You... you weren't responding to me. And you were...” He trails off, looking behind Dream, presumably at the guard he was just slamming against the wall.

Slowly, Dream realizes how much blood he had actually taken from that other guard, and how all of his violent actions would've looked to someone else watching.

He turns to see the other guard on the ground, passed out from blood loss. His breath stutters.

“I...” Dream swallows, and shivers a little, remembering his violent thoughts from just moments ago. “I t-think drinking blood is a bad idea.”

“You just...kept going.” George says shakily. “I-I thought you were gonna kill him.”

I wanted to kill them all, Dream doesn't say.

“I...I'm sorry. Just- I can't drink anymore blood. I think it's, like, awakening something in me...I just felt so- so angry. I don't know what happened.”

George laughs nervously, obviously a little unsettled. Dream wishes he could get rid of the anxiousness that was painfully evident in his body language. “Okay....let's just keep going. These cells are close to the number of the one that guy said was Sapnap's, he's gotta be nearby.”

Dream shakes his head in an attempt to clear his head some. “Right. Sapnap.” He watches George shake his head languidly, attempting to shake off the lightheadedness creeping up on him.

Once we get Sapnap, I can help you, too.

“It'll be over soon, really.” George says quietly, taking Dream's trembling hand in his own as they continue pacing down the hall, and closer to where Sapnap was supposedly held.

Schlatt paces the office uneasily in front of a shaking Karl Jacobs.

“They're...headed off to find Sapnap, sir.”

“And you let them get away, correct?” He turns a quarter, just enough to make eye contact.

Karl shifts uncomfortably. "I did."

"Listen closely." The mayor says, turning to face him fully. "I needed those two in my custody, and still do. *Alive*, and right away. Do you understand?"

"Yes sir. I'll get on it right away."

"You failed me, Jacobs. I won't let you fail me again."

"I...I apologize." Karl lowers his head. He avoids meeting Schlatt's evil eyes.

"You'll communicate this task to your fellow guards and *leave* . Effective immediately. I would rather not get involved myself, if it's not necessary. If you fail to follow these instructions you'll meet a *much* worse fate than losing this job."

"Y-Yes sir, but...Dream has taken out every guard, I was the only one who escaped, and-"

"Jacobs." Schlatt says flatly, narrowing his eyes dangerously.

Karl swallows, shrinking into himself at Schlatt's tone. "Yes, sir?"

"I gave you an order." Schlatt says. "If you can't follow it, then it might be a sad day for that friend of yours, too."

Karl's jaw falls open in shock, eyes widening. "Wha- You don't mean-"

"Quackity has been very loyal to me. It would be a shame to lose him." Schlatt smirks, seeing the conflicted look on Karl's face. "What? You think I won't follow through on my word? You know me better than that, Jacobs."

Karl is stunned for a moment before he lets out a shaky breath, clenching his fists and shutting his eyes. "I...I'll go tell the guards, sir."

“Send Wilbur, too. I need to speak to him.” Schlatt says, disregarding his previous statement as if it hadn’t even been said.

Karl exits the room, head dipped from shame.

Minutes later, Wilbur enters the office with a quiet click of the door. He focuses on the mayor seated at his desk. “You wanted to see me, sir?”

“Yes. Come in.”

Wilbur grabs the edge of a chair at the other side of the desk and pulls it towards himself before he’s interrupted. “Don’t sit, I won’t make this long.”

Wilbur furrows his brows in mild confusion and worry, and straightens, pushing the chair in. “Okay, then what is it?”

Schlatt’s low voice drips with a quiet ferocity hidden behind a curtain of calmness. “There’s been a bit of a...conflict with our two new prisoners. I’ve made a change of plans.”

“I’ve seen the guards that keep getting sent to the prison, we hardly have any left.” Wilbur comments, annoyed. “So what do you have in mind?”

Schlatt sighs and stands, walking around the desk to stand next to Wilbur. The assistant watches him expectantly, yet confused.

“Let me show you.”

Suddenly, Schlatt slams Wilbur against the wall, digging his teeth into his neck as deep as they can go.

Wilbur cries, stumbling back into the wall by Schlatt’s hands. His blood is drawn slowly and painfully, taken from his body in long, harsh sips. As soon as he pulls away to wipe the crimson

nectar off his lips, the assistant sinks to the ground, faint breath growing fainter.

“Schlatt?” He mumbles weakly, bringing a pathetic hand to grasp at his bleeding neck.

The mayor crouches to reach Wilbur’s eyes, tilting his head slightly. “Wilbur, I spelled it out for you. You...you just couldn’t see the signs, could you?” He plucks his glasses off his face.

“I don’t... I don’t understand.” Wilbur manages, squinting as the suddenly harsh light bores into his sensitive eyes.

“Humans and vampires simply can’t coexist. It was always my plan to use you as my personal bloodbag, and you’ve filled that role quite nicely.” He says, wiping the lenses on the edge of his blazer. “Humans are just too emotional, I couldn’t let you tell the others about my plans. That’s a risk I just couldn’t take.”

Wilbur breathes out, lowering his hand from his bleeding neck.

“Oh, and by the way,” Schlatt says, placing the cleaned specs back on Wilbur’s face and pushing them up his nose bridge. “Make sure you say hello to Dream in hell for me once I’m done with him.”

The body goes cold, warmth dissipating. Schlatt stands, sensing Wilbur’s life draining away, and instead taking residence in his body in the form of newfound adrenaline and energy.

He lifts a steady hand to wipe the blood off his hands and onto his blazer.

The feeling is familiar but nonetheless exhilarating. The new, rich blood courses through his body and strengthens his core, heart pumping loud enough that he can hear it himself.

He grabs a gun out of his desk cabinet and pulls back the hammer with his thumb, sounding a click through the room.

“I’ve had enough of this.” He mutters to himself. “I’m not playing nice with them anymore.”

George winces at every guard Dream manages to bring to the ground while still pulling the injured man around, trying to protect him from the various weapons guards use against them.

George keeps watch behind them, watching guards rush out from their quarters to prevent their escape.

One chucks a knife that narrowly misses Dream's head when George reaches up and yanks him down, letting the blade fly over his head.

Dream gasps, straightening and running up next to George, assisting him by knocking the two guards' heads together that he had kicked off of their feet.

George smiles up at him, and he's reminded that *that's* what he's doing all of this for.

This is for George to be happy.

For him to live another day, and to smile again.

And...Sapnap too, I guess.

When Dream turns, he finally sees it.

A tall gate, over which he can see a large stone cell with a clad metal door, labeled 'C418'. Unlike Dream's cell, it had no see-through bars and looked more like an isolation room, purposefully separated from the other lines of cells.

A weight feels like it's been lifted off his crushed chest, lungs exhausted from the fight.

We're going to make it. He thinks hopefully. We're going to make it to him. We're going to get out. George will be safe again, and it'll all be over.

And just when it seems like everything is going to be alright, a shot rings out in the air.

Dream screams, dropping to his knees, and clutching the side of his stomach where the pain had shot through him.

George gasps, leaning down to catch the vampire's arm. Pain blooms across his torso, blood spurting out of the bullet wound.

"Dream!" George cries.

"No wonder there was so much commotion," Schlatt's sickening voice sounds down the hall as Dream turns on his back to see the mayor walking towards them slowly, a handgun with presumably silver bullets in his right hand.

"You always know how to make a scene, Dream."

My Dream

Chapter Summary

we're almost at the end here ! this is a BIG chapter so I'm real excited :D leave comments if you want I really love to read them !!!

promo for the discord server (its poggers you should join):
<https://discord.gg/FxCTxAfFJe>

Warnings for chapter 18: explicit and graphic violence, swearing, blood, torture

enjoy :D

George rakes his eyes over Schlatt's blood covered suit and freezes.

"Who's..." He starts, throat feeling dry. "Who's blood is that?"

The brief consideration that it could be *Sapnap*'s flashes through his mind. He thinks he might throw up, unable to keep the horrible image out of his head.

"Is that your main concern?" Schlatt tilts his head, a twisted grin appearing on his face.

George shakes himself back to focus, grunting as he tries to drag Dream to his feet, but the vampire struggles to stand. Schlatt approaches the two, pointing the gun at George's head. "Let go of him."

"Listen to him, George." Dream croaks. "Just let me go. It's okay."

George resists, only pulling his injured boyfriend closer. Dream shakes his head solemnly.

"I don't want to have to shoot you *this* early. Just drop him."

"No! Get *away* from us!"

Schlatt turns the barrel of the gun to Dream's temple. George's breath hitches.

"I *said*, drop him!" He raises his voice, shoving the front of the barrel against Dream's head. The vampire groans.

George falters, briefly considering trying to fight Schlatt, before realizing that would probably make things worse, letting go and stepping away with a shaky plea. "Just don't kill him, please..."

"That wasn't so hard, was it?" Schlatt says as if he didn't hear him, and grabs Dream's arm and yanks him away, leaving a streak of blood on the floor. George watches in horror as he treats the injured vampire as nothing more than a ragdoll. Dream fights to get away as best he can but fails to match Schlatt's surge of strength from fresh blood.

"Oh, what's this?" Schlatt quirks a brow, squinting. His gaze lands on the large puncture wounds in George's neck.

George clasps a hand over them in an attempt to hide it, but Schlatt's already seen it.

"I don't believe it!" Schlatt laughed incredulously, grabbing Dream's arm and twisting it unnaturally to pull him off his knees, making him whine. "You actually let him bite you! God, you must be *desperate*."

He steps back with the blond in his grasp, his leg wound soaks his dress pants in the crimson liquid.

He draws a silver blade from his suit pocket and holds it to Dream's throat, planting the gun in his belt.

George's eyes instantly widen, blood running cold.

"STOP! Don't hurt him!" George shoots his hand out. He hates the feeling of helplessness, unfiltered fear and dread filling his body.

"But Davidson," He tilts his head in false sympathy. "That ruins the fun."

“What the fuck do you *want* from me?” George sobs. “Where- Where is Sapnap? Did you hurt him?”

“You ask too many questions.” Schlatt says flatly. “It’s not what I want from you...it’s what I want from *him*. You stopped being useful to me as soon as you got involved with him.”

“What...?” George asks shakily.

“Killing the competition?” Schlatt says, like it’s obvious. “You’ve been doing it for years.”

“I...” George stammers. *I’ve been helping him all this time without even knowing it.*

“But once I get *him* on my side,” Schlatt shakes Dream back and forth harshly for emphasis. “We’ll have all the blood we could ever dream of.”

“How could you possibly think I’ll join your side when you treat me like this? When you treat *him* like this?” Dream questions, voice breaking from the strain.

“What else will you have to do once your *little human* is gone?” Schlatt grins, gesturing to George. “I think we both know the real reason you like him so much, don’t lie to yourself.”

Dream’s face scrunches with rage. “You don’t know shit.” His speech slurs slightly through his gritted teeth.

Dream winces when Schlatt presses the silver slightly more into his skin.

“You’re *seriously* still believing all your coexistence garbage?” Schlatt huffs in disbelief. “Well, to be honest, you really do impress me with your self control.” Schlatt looks up and smirks at George, who scowls in return. “Usually with just one bite, vampires don’t have the control to stop themselves.”

“I *stopped* because I-” Dream stutters, and looks into George’s eyes through his damp eyelashes.

George frowns. “Because I care about him. Blood has *nothing* to do...w-with my actions.”

Schlatt hums, sounding as if he’s considering something. Dream holds his breath and shuts his eyes tight, almost expecting death after the silence continues to stretch on.

But then, Schlatt says coolly, “Davidson, come closer.”

Dream opens his eyes, confused.

Why is he letting me come closer now?

George looks between both the mayor and Dream, conflicted. Eventually, he narrows his eyes, sensing some sort of catch. “Why should I?”

Schlatt raises an eyebrow, and maintains eye contact with him as he digs the dagger into Dream’s skin enough to elicit a loud, pained gasp.

George’s stomach drops. “Stop!” He yells, shooting his hands out in front of him.

Schlatt relents slightly, letting up with the knife back to its former position. He looks up at George expectantly, a terribly arrogant grin on his lips. “Come on, then.” He orders.

George hesitates, wondering if he was really about to follow orders from the one holding Dream at knifepoint.

He eyes Dream’s wounds warily, not wanting him to get hurt anymore because of him, and sighs defeatedly, taking a reluctant step forwards.

“Come sit in front of Dream, I’ve got something I need to teach him.”

Oh God.

Too worried for Dream's safety to disobey, George takes a couple steps forwards, and cautiously sits down on his knees, about a foot away from where Schlatt was holding a knife against Dream's neck.

What does he want? Why does he want me to sit?

The moment George stops settling into a sitting position, Schlatt abruptly reaches to grab the back of Dream's head by his hair with his free hand, and pushes him towards George roughly, keeping his grip in his dirty blond strands tight.

George flinches back, gasping sharply.

"No, no, Davidson, stay still." Schlatt scolds. "Unless you *want* Dream to die?"

George swallows, shaking slightly as he sees Dream struggling to move against Schlatt's grip, his head drooping to the ground.

He silently curses to himself, sitting back forwards slowly, when Schlatt pushes Dream's head down more.

George's breathing becomes shallow as he feels Dream's breath fall over the skin of his neck, directly over the wound Dream had left earlier when he was bitten. The blood hadn't completely dried yet, and still was very obviously an open wound.

"You're telling me..." Schlatt drawls, pushing Dream closer to the wound. "...that you have *no* desire to bite him right now?"

Dream tries to look away, but Schlatt just keeps his head in place. His pupils dilate, concentrating on the blood on George's neck. The human whimpers, and tries to pull away, but Schlatt just forces Dream closer when he does.

I...I don't have to convince myself again, he's not going to bite me again.

Dream bares his teeth, straining *hard* to try and get away. His teeth are still bloody from the bite earlier. It makes him look animalistic.

He can hardly control himself already.

This is just torturing him, whether he bites me or not.

This is just evil.

“Stop...” George screws his eyes shut. “Please, stop.”

“That’s what I thought.” Schlatt tsks, pulling Dream away finally.

George backs away in relief as soon as he does, breathing hard and holding a hand over his wound anxiously, hoping it will help Dream recover from the sensory overload.

Dream hisses lowly, seething with anger. “I’ll fucking kill you.” Dream growls. “Y-You’re crazy, what the hell is wrong with you?”

Schlatt hums, ignoring him completely, and traces the tip of the silver blade lightly from Dream’s ear to his chin, then chuckles heartlessly. He lowers the knife to his side.

“So young and strong, you’ll be a perfect asset to me.” Schlatt says, trailing a hand to cup Dream’s face, rough fingers feeling unwelcome and cruel.

Dream sees the opportunity and takes it, quickly biting into Schlatt’s hand as hard as possible.

The mayor screams, digging the blade into the skin of Dream’s neck. Dream immediately releases his hand with a cry, recoiling from the knife. Schlatt’s other arm remains fastened around Dream’s side, making his attempts pointless except for the minor bite he managed.

Dream manages to lick up a small portion of blood that had spilled from the Schlatt’s hand, providing a twinge of relief for his instincts, feeling his mind go a little more numb as he takes in

the strong flavor.

Schlatt's furious now, George can see it in the way his face twists to an angry grimace, a finality in the way he growls so quiet that he could hardly hear it.

Weaving his fingers into Dream's hair, he yanks the blond strands, snapping his head back. "You're such a fucking brat, you know that? Luckily, though, I think I have a solution." A twisted grin takes over his face, one that betrays all innocence.

Dream meets his evil eyes with narrowed ones, glaring like he could burn a hole in the mayor's skull.

"Fuck you." Dream hisses.

Before George can stop him, Schlatt draws his blade away from Dream's neck, and instead to his mouth. Dream's expression quickly turns terrified. George's breath halts.

What the fuck is Schlatt doing?

"Nonono *please* -" Dream pleads, a fleeting attempt to stop the inevitable, panic causing his voice to shake with fruitless attempts at leaning away from the dagger.

The blade slices into Dream's gums.

The scream of agony that rings in the air is nothing less than petrifying.

Schlatt begins to carve out Dream's fangs like he's simply cutting a fruit. There's no remorse or wincing as he digs into the bleeding flesh, and burns the red-hot tissue. The blood flows from his mouth and trickles down his tattered shirt.

"STOP!" George finds his voice, barely recovering from the nauseating shock enough to react. "SCHLATT STOP! "

His pleas are rendered useless.

Schlatt continues to dig the blade in, smiling much too casually.

Dream cries out, voice hoarse and raw, clawing its way out of his sore throat. He tries to bite down on Schlatt's hand, but his mouth is pried open, and only stings more when he tries to bite against the silver.

Tears well up in his eyes and spill over as his first fang falls to the dirty concrete below, one from the top row.

George's body racks in a shiver. *He's going to take away all of his fangs. He won't stand a chance in a fight.*

The mayor doesn't hesitate, simply moving to the next with no remorse.

The pain only seems to progress as Dream's adrenaline rush dies out, leaving only the pain to take over. The screams from George began to be hard to discern among the agony.

As George watches the events unfold, he can't help but wonder.

Why do things have to be like this?

Why can't we just be happy ?

Why can't I keep one good thing in my life, and not destroy it somehow?

George watches as tears stream down the younger's freckled, blood splattered face, brain feeling fuzzy from the fatal blood loss and sickening taste of his own blood on his tongue. Dream tries weakly to get away, pulling his spinning head away from Schlatt's unforgiving grasp. He fails, too dizzy to do anything to fight the overpowering agony.

Dream's second fang is pulled from his mouth with a twitch, sounding another disgusting wet

noise as it leaves it's socket.

Dream sobs helplessly, the sound filling George's head.

It's horribly jarring for George to see Dream, who was always so strong and intimidating, being overpowered and defanged. He thinks back to when he'd shot the man, guilt rising in his throat like bile.

Just when George thinks he's done, Schlatt reangles the knife to aim at Dream's bottom row of fangs.

Dream already looks like he's about to pass out at any moment, drowning in the pure *pain* .

George finally boils over in pure desperation, and charges forward in hopes of stopping Schlatt.

When he gets within a couple feet of them, Schlatt snaps his head to look up and presses the knife to the side of Dream's cheek, lightly pressing it into his skin. George halts immediately, breath hitching.

"Stay back!" Schlatt snaps. "Don't come any closer, Davidson. I'll kill him." He hisses, yanking Dream's hair for emphasis.

"You're already killing him! *PLEASE!* " George begs, but refrains from coming closer.

What should I do? Fuck. He might die of blood loss either way. But I don't want to find out what happens if I try to get closer. Fucking hell...how could I let this happen?

The mayor doesn't let up, only continuing to carve into Dream's mouth. George can hear the sizzle of burning tissue, watching the dark blood flow and clot. Unsteady cries fall from Dream's wounded mouth.

George briefly wonders if Dream's own blood is able to heal him, but can tell from the constant look of agony on his face and the continuous flow of blood, that it must not be the case.

“You see...” Schlatt begins, now that he can be heard over Dream’s screams, which have delved into sobbing. “Humans and vampires simply can’t coexist. That’s the same reason I killed my pathetic assistant. He couldn’t do *shit* for me.”

Another fang is removed, but this time it’s fast, unnecessarily harsh.

At this point, George is desperate for a solution. He winces with every sob Dream lets out, hardly processing the words coming out of Schlatt’s mouth. His mind moves miles a minute as he runs through his options.

Through his tear filled vision, George notices Dream’s bullet wound has closed most of the way, save for the dried blood and some bad scarring. *He healed from the blood of the guards and Schlatt. Maybe mine as well. Schlatt just keeps cutting into his gums so that they don’t get time to heal. Of course he would know how to perfectly torture an immortal being.*

Come on, fuck , come on. Ideas...how do I get Dream out of this?

I have to do something.

He meets Dream’s tear filled eyes, trying desperately to communicate through his gaze. He gets an idea.

While Schlatt is busy angling his knife at the last fang, George looks down at his leg, then back at Dream. When he sees Dream’s eyes following his gestures, he does a small kicking motion with his leg, and nods towards Schlatt.

Dream nods the most he can without it being noticeable, and George hopes that Dream understood what he meant.

He holds his hand up, signaling for Dream to wait. Dream blinks, and George assumes that means he understood.

“Why are you doing this?” George asks, teary eyed and trying to sound more interested in Schlatt’s motives than he actually is. “I-I don’t understand.”

“Humans never do.” Schlatt tsks. “It’s really not personal. Well, not with you, at least.”

George notices Dream attempts to calm his breathing, and focuses on watching expectantly for a signal. “*What?* What did Dream ever do to you?”

Schlatt’s expression shifts from cocky to frustrated. “Dream has always insisted on living in a way that just ends up hurting everyone.” Schlatt says, tone heavy with annoyance. “I tried to tell him, you know, that being like this,” Schlatt tugs hard on Dream’s hair, causing him to let out an agonized gasp. “...it only ends in pain. Just like right now.”

George’s hands curl into fists, his nails digging into his palm as he tries to control his anger, taking a cautious step forwards. “Dream is hurt right now because *you* chose to hurt him. This is all *your* fault!”

George’s breath hitches when Schlatt touches the tip of the knife to Dream’s gums, right next to his last remaining fang. “I know this must be difficult for you to understand, human,” Schlatt hisses. “But when you’re given such a great power in this world, your responsibility is to become that role. Because when you don’t...well,” He digs into Dream’s gums slightly. George winces.

“...there are consequences.”

George fears if he waits any longer, something worse may happen. Dream shares his concerns, judging by the way his eyes squint from the pain.

“Now!” George yells.

Dream kicks Schlatt in the shin with as much force as he can muster. The mayor inhales sharply, losing his balance and nearly dropping his knife, but assures his grip with a harsh press to the blond’s throat.

Dream yelps and wrenches it out of his hands, sliding it over to George. He stops the blade with his boot, picking it off of the floor.

Schlatt reaches for the gun in his belt, grabbing it with his injured hand and pointing it at Dream’s face. The younger grabs the barrel and throws the gun to the side, letting it hit the wall with a loud clang.

The mayor growls and grabs Dream's throat, pinning him to the floor with a thud. "You just don't know when to *quit*, do you?"

Dream struggles against his grip, weakly clawing at Schlatt's arm, digging his nails into the skin. The mayor keeps his arm firmly in place, much to Dream's dismay. He begins to lose oxygen.

George takes the blade to the back of Schlatt's neck, swiping at his pale skin, but the mayor grabs the blade with his free hand almost as soon as it penetrates his skin, turning it around and jabbing it towards the human.

George dodges the blade and tackles Schlatt off of Dream, who gasps for air when released from his unrelenting grip.

Schlatt punches George in the face, sending him onto his back from the sheer amount of force that was used.

Pain explodes from the place he was hit, blooming across his face. The vampire takes the opportunity to stand, lifting a shoe to crush the human's skull beneath his shoe. He rolls away just in time, the heel of his dress shoe just barely missing his cheek.

Before Schlatt can attempt to attack George again, Dream is back on him, tackling him to the ground.

"Why do you shy away from your vampirism?" Schlatt questions, pushing Dream off of himself and standing back up. "Becoming a vampire was the best thing that ever happened to you."

"It ruined my life!" Dream shouts, grabbing Schlatt's leg and pulling him to the floor. His head makes impact with the concrete, eliciting a pained groan from the mayor.

"Even I didn't want to be a vampire when I was young, Dream." Schlatt mutters, pushing himself back up. "But look where it got me. I control every human in this pathetic town. And by trying to be human, holding on to that ever-fleeting part of yourself," Schlatt lunges at Dream, gripping his shoulders and pushing back hard, but Dream manages to match the energy, pushing back enough to stay upright. "...you've been brought to my mercy."

“I don’t care.” Dream says with a strained voice, struggling to match Schlatt’s strength, feeling his heels sliding backwards against the concrete. “I don’t care what you think. I used to-” Dream glances quickly over at George, then focuses back on Schlatt. “I used to think that I was a monster. But *you*-” Dream groans as he pushes back a little harder. “You’re *really* a monster.”

Dream musters the strength to push Schlatt off him, where George grabs him around his neck and brings the knife up to stab him in the head. The mayor kicks George’s legs out behind him, snaking out of the brunet’s grip.

“You pesky little-” Schlatt hisses, ready to lunge at George again, before Dream locks an arm around his neck, yanking him backwards.

“You’re not-” Dream groans, struggling to keep Schlatt in his grip. “You’re not touching him.”

Schlatt suddenly leans forwards, then knocks the back of his head against Dream’s, causing him to let go with a hiss.

“You know what you are, Dream?” Schlatt says, sounding a little out of the blue, and more fueled by raw anger than usual. “You’re *ungrateful* .”

Dream clutches his nose where he was hit, eyeing Schlatt with disgust. “What’s *that* supposed to mean?”

“*I* was the one who saw your potential, you know.” Schlatt begins sidestepping, and Dream steps opposite to him. “You’d be *nothing* without me. It’s just such a shame that you...you push away this gift I’ve given you.”

Dream raises a brow, confused by what he means. “I-I don’t know what you’re thinking about, but you’ve *never* helped me. When we were friends, you just- you just wanted to take advantage of my kindness.”

Schlatt barks out a laugh, as if it’s the funniest joke he’s ever heard. “Do you seriously not remember? I never knew if you were just pretending to not know who I was, but I guess you really didn’t, after all that time.”

Dream closes in his steps a little closer, growing more annoyed, but curious. “What the hell are you

talking about? I met you for the first time five years ago.”

Schlatt surges forward abruptly, and Dream struggles as he’s pushed back, unable to match his strength, much to his horror.

“I turned you because I saw what you’d be capable of.” Schlatt’s grin is sickening. “It’s still there, inside you.”

Dream loses all focus, realizations flooding him all at once.

“Join me, Dream.” Schlatt grabs Dream by his shirt, holding him up and resisting all of his struggles. “ *Become a God with me* . You can still be who you’re *meant* to be. You just have to take my offer, lose this human of yours and the power is ours to share.”

Dream struggles to fully stay present in the moment, eyes wide with sudden understanding that *Schlatt* was the one who ruined his life. *Schlatt* was the one who made him this way.

That was his goal from the beginning.

To make Dream into his puppet.

The revelation crushes him. He wants to cry, scream, and kill all at the same time. His blood boils, pupils shrinking paper-thin where they meet Schlatt’s evil eyes.

“You...” Dream seethes. “ *You* turned me into a vampire?”

Schlatt laughs, appearing amused at Dream’s anger, and the sound of it sinks under Dream’s skin, making him clench his fists and tense his whole body. Nerves ignite and fire down his spine, shocking through his limbs, electrifying every part of his being.

With a bloodied mouth and furious eyes, he rasps, “My mother *left* me because of you.”

With a sudden burst of energy, Dream is pushing Schlatt back, and the sick grin on the mayor’s

face falls.

Dream yells as he pushes Schlatt to the ground with all of the force he can muster, hearing a slight crack in the floor as his body hits the ground.

George is just as shocked, unable to move or speak till he snaps back to reality. In a moment of adrenaline high, he draws the silver blade, grip tight around the leather handle, and stabs it into Schlatt's chest.

For a moment nothing happens.

George realizes he had closed his eyes, and flutters them open slowly, seeing his shaky hands tight on the grip of the silver blade driven into Schlatt's body. He exhales, relieved to see that the body appeared to be unmoving.

He looks up at Dream, panting hard and eyes wild from adrenaline.

Dream smiles back.

In the moment, George doesn't notice Schlatt reach out and grab the discarded gun from before. To his horror, Dream doesn't react fast enough to stop him.

White-hot pain explodes in George's right arm.

Did I just...get shot?

At first, he doesn't want to look. He doesn't want to see the fucked up flesh of his upper arm, blown out by the bullet that struck him. The warm blood sprays, he can feel it gushing out of the wound at a fatal pace.

George's ears ring loudly, his body feels as if it's not his, and while a part of him is thankful the bullet hadn't hit his heart, the aggressive anguish makes it hard to think about anything else at the moment. Schlatt's body hovering over him doesn't help a thing.

George takes a shuddering breath, and drives the knife deeper into Schlatt's body as hard as he can until he's sure the body has stopped moving. The mayor makes a sickening choke, before going limp.

"*George!*" Dream cries, throwing Schlatt off of him and lifting his fragile body off of the ground.

George's breath grows faint, feeling the blood loss killing him. His eyes water, pain surging through him like a flash-flood. He feels like a weight is crushing his chest, shuddering breaths traveling in and out of his tired lungs.

The way Dream eyes him hurts him like venom. The horrified concern in his teary eyes gives George the strength to stay awake, despite how desperately his body is begging for rest. The vampire's hands shake, unsteady and uncertain as they hold the dying human close to his chest.

"Dream." George says softly, raising a hand to brush the blond hair out of his boyfriend's face.

"Oh *God*. We- We have to get you home." Dream sputters, tears pooling in his eyes. "I'm gonna get you out of here, okay? I'll bandage you up, just like I did when you were attacked by that vampire. A-And then I'll come back to break Sappnap out of here. Just stay- Just be strong for me, George. Okay? Please, he can help me fix you once I get- get him out."

"Dream, you need to drink Schlatt's blood." George says faintly. "You're hurt."

"What? *No*, I can't. You...you know how I get when I drink blood." He says, voice frantic. "And besides, we don't have time for that!"

"S'okay..." George mutters. His body begins to feel lighter, the pain beginning to fade more into complete emptiness. Darkness. "J-Just hold me, p-please. I'm sorry, Dream...it hurts."

Dream complies immediately, holding George as close to him as possible as if it would stop the bleeding and fix everything. "You're shaking so bad, *fuck*, George- w-we need to get you home *now*- "

"Shh..." George pats Dream's chest weakly. "It's okay. You'll...take care of S-Sap for me, right?"

Hot tears fall from Dream's eyes, stinging against the cuts on his cheeks. "S-Stop talking like that." Dream croaks, holding George's trembling figure tighter. "George, *please* ."

George's vision begins darkening with lightheadedness, making it difficult to stay conscious. His body begs for him to close his eyes, as if it were trying to drag him down to hell. His wounds sting like anything. Dark, unforgiving hands close around his body, crushing his chest and tearing him apart.

"Dream..."

He reaches a quivering hand up to Dream's cheek, resting faintly over the blood and tear tracks. He tries to smile, but it's weak and less than joyful. He brushes his thumb over the vampire's pale skin.

"George?" Dream asks, voice pained and quiet. He clasps a hand over George's against his cheek. A sob escapes him, wracking his body with shivers. "George, *please* . I-I can't lose you too."

He wants to tell Dream how much it hurts. He wants to cry, curl up and let his partner rock him to sleep till he wakes from this awful nightmare. He wants nothing more than for it to end.

His heart *aches*. Nothing hurts more than his heart, and he'd get shot a thousand more times if it meant they could just have a happy ending.

He *wants* to be strong for Dream.

He *wants* to be strong for Sapnap.

He *wants* to be strong. Strong enough to get them out of this.

But he can't.

"I love you." George mumbles.

He can hardly hear Dream's response, a mix of words of affirmation and sobbing. He wants to tell

him *it's going to be okay* but he doesn't want to lie when he starts to feel his vision fade out.

“*My Dream...*”

When It's Over

Chapter Summary

WE ARENT DEAD! so sorry yall we are so busy but there's only one more chapter after this so hang in there ! we hope you enjoy this one :D

while you're here...

- donate to cancer research here!

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- join our discord server!

<https://discord.gg/K8cufQt5kc>

Warnings for chapter 19: language, death/talk of death, graphic wounds

enjoy :D

Dream feels George's hand slowly fall limp on his chest, fingers trailing over his shirt before falling out to his side.

He blinks hard, fighting to see through the tears, and leans down. "George...?"

He's met with deafening silence.

Dream stares down grimly at George's beaten and bloodied body, realizing just how *much* the poor human had endured. So many cuts, scrapes, bruises, and of course the damn bullet wound. He thinks he might throw up at the scene.

"No no no-" He whispers, pulling the body to his chest. "George, wake up, *please*... please don't leave me!"

The tears and blood on his face stain George's shirt as he cries, loud sobs escaping his worn body

in waves. He heaves, shaking, clutching his boyfriend's body close to his chest. He's crying so hard he can't breathe, curled over and gasping to try and get air into his lungs.

After a moment, he feels something. His sobbing comes to a halt, fat tears continuing to roll down his cheeks.

His eyes fly open in shock.

What..?

He waits impatiently, placing his hand on the center of George's chest.

It happens again. George's chest rises slightly beneath his palm, before falling back down, just as soft.

Dream exhales loudly, almost smiling in disbelief. His tears fall onto George's blood-stained shirt.

He's alive.

He's still alive. Oh my god.

There's a slight stutter in the way George breathes, almost looking like twitching more than anything. Dream realizes that his life could dissipate if they don't get help soon.

He urgently hooks his left arm under George's knees and his right arm under George's back, picking him up cautiously but quickly. In his haste, he forgets how weakened he is, nearly dropping George back to the ground, just barely managing to stand with the extra weight.

"I-It's okay, it's gonna be okay, George." Dream whispers hoarsely, leaning back against the wall for balance. He looks around as if someone will tell him what to do. For the first time, he doesn't know.

What am I supposed to do? I don't have anything to heal him, the only healing supplies I know

about are at his house. But there's no way I'll make it all the way back there in this state. I'm losing strength and blood...

Dream looks around frantically, then remembers when he sees the cell number 'C418', that they didn't even save Sapnap with all of their effort.

We don't have time to save him, though, George needs help now, he needs-

Dream exhales, an attempt to rationalize and organize his scattered thoughts.

Sapnap.

He'll know how to help, surely.

George wouldn't want me to leave him here.

He looks down at his boyfriend again, feeling a pang of worry in his exhausted chest. He reaches up, brushing a stray strand of dark brown hair out of his face with his knuckles.

He looks peaceful.

"You're gonna be okay." Dream promises, and begins walking towards the cell with newfound determination.

He sets George's body down gently to sit against the side wall to the left of Sapnap's cell, making sure that his head was supported in the wall corner and that his arms and legs were in a comfortable sitting position before backing away to approach the cell door.

The cell is quite different from the other cells in the jail, with no see-through bars at all and looking as if it was meant for only the worst prisoners, which is rather ironic considering it's currently holding one of the least threatening and most considerate humans Dream has ever known.

The distant patter of guards on the floor above urges him to hurry, so he clenches his fist and

punches through the small glass frame just at eye-level in order to get Sapnap's attention.

"Sapnap!" He whisper-shouts. "*Sapnap!*"

The man in question snaps his head up, hair mussed and face slightly bruised. "Wh- *Dream?*"

"I'm gonna get you out of here. I need your help, George is in danger."

The ravenette stands and rushes over to the glass, watching uneasily as Dream punches through the metal, ripping into the material hard enough to make his knuckles bleed. He pulls the human through the hole he made in the wall.

"What's going on? What happened to him?" Sapnap asks shakily, in a state of shock.

"He got shot." Saying it aloud feels almost as if he made it come true, the words hitting them both with a wave of panic. "He's still alive, but he's barely breathing...I need you to help me bring him to his house."

"*What?* Holy shit! W-Where was he shot?" Sapnap asks frantically. "Who shot him?"

"His arm." Dream says. "It's bleeding...a lot. Schlatt shot him before he died."

"The mayor is dead? Holy shit. God... *fuck* ...okay. Oh God." He blinks fast, and shakes his head from side to side in shock. "I...Okay, wait, my house is closer. We'll go to mine and take care of him there."

"Do you have things to help him there?" Dream inquires, stepping back towards where George is set against the wall and feeling a pang of guilt at the limpness of his body. *I did this.*

"Yeah...yeah I do." Sapnap answers, obviously still in a state of mild shock. Dream catches the way that the ravenette eyes him with caution, as if he might suddenly tackle him to the ground at any moment. Dream can't blame him - he *is* covered head to toe in blood and just broke a metal door apart with his bare hands. But now, there's no time for reassurance.

The only thing that matters right now is getting George to safety.

Dream nods and rushes down the hall, prompting Sapnap to follow closely. Despite the human's head trauma, the ravenette is quick and quiet on his feet, determined to be of any use he can (even if he stumbles slightly with each step).

The moment George's unconscious body comes into view of Sapnap, he rushes over with a startled gasp, dropping onto his knees and nearly pushing Dream out of the way with how frantic he is. He cradles the brunet's head, raking his eyes over the wounds.

"Fuck, oh my God- George?" Sapnap's brows pinch with concern as he runs a tender hand over George's arm, warm blood staining his fingers and cooling his hands against the air. His eyes widen in horror when he sees George's neck, terror leaping into his chest.

Dream grimaces. *Oh, right. That doesn't look good.*

Sapnap lets out a shuddering breath, looking up at Dream with genuine fear in his glossy eyes, a look that Dream wasn't used to seeing on the human's face. "D-Did you?" He swallows. "Dream, did you do this?"

"H-He let me!" Dream rushes out, holding his hands up defensively, which probably didn't do much good considering he was *literally* red handed. "It was the only way out of that cell...he told me to, I promise."

Sapnap looks hesitant, tearing his gaze away from the puncture wound on George's throat.

"I didn't want to hurt him. It was the only way." Dream tries to ease his mind, desperate to prove to Sapnap (and maybe himself) that he's not at fault for George's beaten state. *But...I am.*

Sapnap is quiet for a moment, hands shaky on George's body.

"Okay...okay." Sapnap mumbles softly. Dream can only assume he doesn't have time to be worried about that right now.

Dream watches as Sapnap peels George's blood-soaked shirt away from the wound to make sure it isn't pulled into the injury. He tears the sleeve off his own shirt, teeth biting the seam. He reaches down and wraps the cloth around George's bullet wound, gently applying pressure with his skilled hands.

"Should we remove the bullet?" Dream's voice comes out choked and insecure. He cringes at the way he feels useless, not knowing how to help. The vampire has avoided humans basically all his life, so caring for humans wasn't exactly his forte, even if he tried *very* hard when it came to George.

"No...I think that comes later. I'm worried he'll lose more blood if we do that now. It's acting as a cork of sorts." Sapnap mumbles, standing. "We need to get out of here. You...you have super strength or something, right? Can you carry him?"

"I-I'm a little weak but yes, I think I can manage." Dream says, scooping his boyfriend's unconscious body off the ground and into his arms, taking care to rest the nape of his neck in the crook of his elbow. "Are you hurt? Can I help at all?"

He finds himself asking the question, feeling almost proud of himself for genuinely caring about a human other than George. His face burns slightly with shame upon realizing he's rewarding himself for basic decency, something so expected from others already.

"It might be a concussion, but I'm okay." Sapnap reassures, rubbing the back of his head. "That's the least of our concerns now."

The two rush through the hall and to the closest door, taking them to the back of the building. Empty cells line the walls, some stained with blood, others containing what look like unconscious or dead bodies. Neither let their gaze linger long enough to find out.

Dust jumping beneath their feet, they run through the dimly lit halls, the sounds of their footsteps bouncing off the stone walls. Dream's breath catches in his throat when he spots an exit. "There!" He shouts.

Sapnap darts towards it, pushing the heavy door open with difficulty. Moonlight trickles through the crack in the door as the opening grows wider, and Dream is flooded with relief at the realization that he doesn't have to shield himself from the sun during their escape. Blue moonlight spills into the cracks of the open door.

Dream passes through the frame, carefully cradling George's head and legs a little closer to his own body so he doesn't hit the wall.

He steps out and into the open after Sapnap, and takes a deep, relieved inhale of the fresh air. He didn't realize how much everything in that damned prison reeked of *blood*. It's a miracle that he's still able to control himself. He thanks whatever higher power there is that he hadn't completely lost it.

"C'mon," Sapnap reassures, noticing the look of somberness in Dream's expression. He begins walking towards somewhere separate from the gravel road that Dream assumes they came here from, a path that's more grassy and open, less tamed. Sapnap quickly explains as he continues walking, and Dream follows. "I know where we are, this is the fastest way to my house...I just hope it's fast enough."

"We were brought here in wagons. Is it possible to steal one for us to go home in?" Dream asks hopefully, turning to him.

"I think they put the horses away for the night. This is our best bet." Sapnap says somberly. Dream sighs heavily, with a reluctant nod. "You're sure you can carry him?"

"Yeah. Yeah it's fine." Dream says.

The last thing he wants is for Sapnap to think lower of him.

They trudge down the path, their heavy eyelids threatening to close with each push forwards. His feet feel heavy as he tries to keep up with Sapnap, rushing down the path to try and get out of sight.

Dream finds it hard to look at George's injured and barely breathing body, but at the same time, he can't tear his eyes away. He looks down at his injured partner, neck falling back to reveal the bite on his neck that Dream would do anything to remove from his otherwise perfect skin. The blood is dried and caked down his neck, a fountain of his shame, reminding Dream just how much George pushed aside his own pain for his sake. He feels the pit of his stomach growing as he adjusts his hold to cradle George's limp and torn up arm.

Dream remorsefully forces his eyes away from the gruesome sight.

Stop beating yourself up over it, dumbass. It's not gonna heal George any faster.

Focus on getting him to Sapnap's. That's all.

The balls of his feet ache with each step, trudging off into the forest in order to get cover from the facility. He walks close behind Sapnap, following his guidance to a point, not wanting to waste a single glance in a direction that could take longer than necessary.

The shield of evergreen trees casts a shadow on the trio, covering them from the prison's line of sight. Sapnap breathes a sigh of relief, expelling the tension in his lungs in one big swoop, making the air in front of him dance.

It's deceptively peaceful out at the moment, the night air unusually fresh and the moon too beautifully bright for such a horrible time.

Is this what he would remember the night to be like, when he recalls George's death? A beautiful, breezy and quiet midnight?

Stop.

Stop thinking like that.

George is going to be fine.

It's hard not to think about it. He doesn't know how to tear his mind away so he doesn't, the vivid image of a beautiful and tragic funeral burned into his mind. He pictures how he'll look back on himself years from now when the townsfolk age while he stays exactly the same. He feels the regret burn in his chest more pressingly, as if it'll burn a hole big enough for his heart to fall out of his chest.

Their journey slows as fatigue clearly starts taking a toll on Dream, pulling his feet along the ground as if they're weights. The weight of George's body against his own feels like it's pulling him down towards the earth, a feeling he isn't at all used to.

His body begs for him to lie down against the cool soil and take a rest, to let the grass tickle his face and to lull him into a deep sleep.

But to Dream, he has no option but to resist the temptation.

His own needs have no place in a situation where George could be dead any second.

"Dream, I'm sorry I caused this whole mess." Sapnap says, suddenly. Dream doesn't expend the effort to look over, but raises his brows with some effort at the apology as he listens. "I...just wanted to keep him safe. I didn't know they would do this to you, or...him." His voice breaks as he averts his gaze, tips of his ears pinkening with nerves (though it's hard to tell in the cold lighting).

"You didn't know." Dream assures, unsure what else to say. He's not exactly in the best state right now to provide thoughtful commentary, but regardless, he tries his best. If Sapnap was George's closest friend, then he'd do his best to grow closer with him, too. "I'm sure he knows you didn't mean for this to happen."

"Yeah...yeah." Sapnap says, trailing off, pondering Dream's words.

They walk in silence for a minute or so, urgency still evident in their weak but determined footsteps. Each stomp of their boots carves a little dent into the muddy soil.

"I saw your teeth." Sapnap says. "I didn't have time to ask before...what the hell happened?"

Dream flicks his tongue over his now-absent fangs, tasting blood on his lips. It stings where he prods at the wound.

"Schlatt cut them out." Dream says shamefully. "I'd wanted to be human so bad, in his eyes, so he just..."

"Dear God." Sapnap mutters. "That's *fucked*."

Dream doesn't respond, paying careful attention to his footsteps. He notices Sapnap is walking in sync with him.

"So...how does it work?" Sapnap asks quietly. "The vampirism."

Dream actually perks up slightly at that, shocked that the human was asking him so directly about his monstrosity. "Oh...I dunno. If you mean, like, my *powers* or whatever, I just drink blood when I'm hungry and it makes me stronger."

"Well...how often do you get hungry?" Sapnap questions.

"Every week or so." His response comes easy. "I hunt fish, deer, rabbits, and horses. Generally."

"Wait, *you don't drink human blood?*" Sapnap's face contorts in disbelief.

"No." Dream says grimly, haphazardly kicking a large stick out of his way. "Not until today."

"Oh." Sapnap murmurs flatly. "Uh...sorry. Maybe I shouldn't have jumped to conclusions."

"Well..." Dream grimaces, and looks down at the body in his arms. "You were kinda right to assume. When me and George first met at the town square...I was planning on biting him. I was starving."

Sapnap suddenly has a look of nervousness, eyes widening slightly.

Dream continues hastily. "But eventually...I found that I couldn't make any more excuses for why I wasn't killing him. I thought I could find some dirt on him, some shitty excuse to rationalize my murder, but the more time I spent with him, the more I learned about him, the more I think...I had no option *but* to fall in love with him." He smiles a little, flushing a bit at the blatant admission. "And...here we are."

"That's...actually really sweet." Sapnap admits. He shakes his head with endearment. "I think I'm gonna be sick, actually...." His grin only widens.

"Oh, shut up." Dream replies, feeling almost relieved at being able to smile at something for the first time in what feels like eternity. "Should've known you'd make fun of me for it."

“Just a bit,” Sapnap teases, though there’s a hint of sincerity in his tone. “I think it’s nice, though. You know...that you care about him so much, despite everything.”

“Yeah...” Dream blinks hard as some of Sapnap’s words become muffled to him, trying to shake off the sudden feeling drowning his head. “...I-I think so too.”

He starts to feel lightheaded, chest feeling heavy. His breath grows rough and heavy, his head slowly starting to spin and make it difficult to keep his steps straight.

“Um, Sapnap...?” Dream huffs. He screws his eyes shut, stumbling slightly.

“Dream?” Sapnap turns to face him, noticing his paling skin and shaky arms. His face falls.

“Dude, I’m telling you I can carry him!” Sapnap says frantically. “You- You need to rest.”

Dream drops to his knees as the words leave Sapnap’s mouth, breathing heavily, hands shaking far too much to be healthy. His breaths are sharp and painful in his chest.

Sapnap crouches in front of him, concerned. “I’ll hold him. My house isn’t far from here. C-Come on.”

He gently picks George off the dirt and rests the body on his shoulder. With his other hand he grabs Dream’s wrist and pulls him to his feet with alarming strength for someone meant to be much weaker than him. “We gotta get you taken care of, too.”

“But George-” Dream begins, wanting to care for his priority.

“*George* is-!” Sapnap starts loudly, voice piercing through Dream’s ears with a fierceness he can’t quite place. He stops himself, upon seeing the other’s tear-stained face looking at him with wide eyes.

“George is...is going to be okay.” Sapnap says apologetically, voice cracking. He presses his lips

into a thin line, taking a shuddering breath in, pulling George close to himself. "He's going to be okay. We- We just need to hurry."

"...okay." Dream murmurs. The stress is clearly getting to both of them.

"This is a lot to process." Sapnap admits. "It's...hard to think rationally. I'm scared, too. But I know that I need to be strong for him. You do, too. And that means you can't be stubborn to the point where it gets you killed."

Dream nods in understanding, sympathy making his heart swell. He tries to put himself in Sapnap's shoes, thinking how the mortal might feel now that everything has changed so quickly, including the prospect of losing the one closest to him.

Their footsteps sync as they walk in tandem, taking the unfamiliar path to Sapnap's house. Dream can't help but wonder resentfully if the trip could possibly take any longer. The dirt is soft beneath Dream's worn boots, and he takes the time to take a deep, shaky breath.

Everything hurts. So fucking much.

"I'm sorry." Dream says guiltily. "And...I know you're afraid of me. And I know this is a lot to take in...y-you're doing great." He tries to sound empathetic, and while practicing compassion with humans was made easier thanks to George, it still felt rather unnatural to actually act out even if the feelings are genuine.

He's met with guilty silence.

"He would be proud of you." Dream adds. He's grateful it comes out sounding just as genuine as he meant it. Because it's true, George would- *will* - undoubtedly be proud of Sapnap for his bravery.

Sapnap gives him a sad smile in response. "You think so? I dunno...I kinda look up to him. But don't tell him that." A short laugh. "I just like to bug him because I care. I guess that's how I fucked us all over. I-I shouldn't have gone into his business."

Dream considers for a brief moment that he could take out his frustration on Sapnap right now, it would be rather easy to blame him for everything that's happened. After all, he *was* the one that

told the mayor about him and George. Dream could just yell at the human about how nothing was his own fault and how he ruined everything for them.

But when he glances to his side, seeing the haunted and guilty look in the human's eyes as he drags his feet with each step, he's reminded that nothing is ever that simple. Sapnap made a mistake, and Dream would be a hypocrite to say that he's never done the same.

"I know you were just trying to protect him." Dream whispers, looking back down at his own feet.

"I...was." Sapnap bites his lip anxiously. "I should've known he could do it on his own."

When he's met with silence, he's prompted to continue.

"I love him a lot. Ever since we met when he was a teenager, we've always had a connection. And...even though he's been through hell and back, he's the strongest person I know." Sapnap says softly, lost in thought. "He doesn't like to show when he's hurting, but...I'm lucky he lets me be a part of his life."

"I'm happy he has you. He loves you a lot, too." Dream smiles brightly. "You're...not trying to steal him from me, are you?" Dream teases, an attempt to ease the tone of the conversation.

Sapnap throws his head back, laughing. "No way, man. He's *far* too high maintenance for me." He says fondly. "He's all yours."

All mine.

Dream turns to look at George's pale face, raking his eyes over his peaceful state. His lips are cracked, blood seeping through the small divots. His expression turns grim.

"I-I think I see it!" Sapnap cuts in.

Indeed he does, for over the line of the hill ahead Dream spots the brick roof and concrete walls of Sapnap's abode.

Sapnap jogs up the hill to his best ability, despite his tired and tattered state. George feels heavier and heavier in his hands as he approaches a place to set the body down. Dream is close behind him.

Sapnap pulls the door handle, stepping back to let it swing open. He's been looking to get it replaced so it doesn't hit his guests in the face when they try to enter, but he hasn't bothered to replace it.

Once they enter the dimly lit house, there's a newly sprouted urgency in them both. Sapnap clears the dining room table with one arm, letting items clatter to the floor, and sets George down in the center, and props his head up with a cushion.

He snatches some napkins off his dining room table and fills a mug with water. "Here, drink this. Swish out the water to get rid of the blood from your mouth wound. Then clean the blood off your teeth."

Sapnap kicks off his shoes. Dream swishes the water, letting it weave between his injured gums and remaining teeth. He spits it out in the sink and pats down on the now-closed, but very much still painful wounds. He winces.

"Can you light a candle?" Sapnap asks hurriedly, pushing past him to reach his bathroom for supplies.

Shame rushes up Dream's neck and turns him red. "Um...fire...I can't-" *Why am I such a coward?*

Sapnap groans. "Here, hold these." He shoves the supplies into Dream's arms, not unkindly, but with haste. "Just wipe around gently with some water to get rid of the blood. Let me grab a candle."

Dream wets the handkerchief and walks over, standing over George's resting state and shivering at how lifeless George looks laid down like this.

He looks dead.

He swallows his vile dread and gently begins to wipe around the wound, cleaning caked blood off his arms and around Sapnap's shirt sleeve still wrapped around the wound. He's thankful that, because of George, he actually somewhat knows what he's doing right now.

Each swipe of dry blood and grime makes Dream feel like maybe he's fixing his mistakes, maybe he's fixing George and making amends for things he doesn't deserve to be forgiven for.

When the area around the wound is clean, he starts to unwrap Sapnap's now soaked-through shirt sleeve from the injury.

Sapnap returns with a dim light atop melting wax, setting it beside George's shoulder to provide the light he needs. "Good, good. Okay." Sapnap murmurs.

He looks at the wound itself grimly. Shreds of fabric from George's shirt are in the wound, torn muscle and blood gushing from the place of impact. It's so much *red*. Sapnap looks sick, color drained from his face.

He begins to pick out the fabric and dead tissue from the wound with tweezers, while Dream stands by. He winces with each pull of the dead, organic matter.

He reaches in with gloved hands, gently pinching and pulling out the bullet.

It's covered in blood, and the bleeding starts to speed up as soon as he pulls it away from the wound, connecting them with a long string of red.

Sapnap sighs heavily, looking to the ceiling as if it will tell him what to do. "Fuck..."

"What?" Dream asks.

"I...He may need stitches." Sapnap throws the bullet in his dustbin. "I don't know how to do it right."

"Stitches?"

"It's like when you have to sew the skin shut." Sapnap explains, clearly flustered. "He's done it for my hand before." He holds up his left palm, pointing out a faint line of scarred tissue.

“That sounds...” *Gruesome.*

“I’m scared.” Sapnap mumbles. “ *Fuck*, I’m scared. I-I don’t think there’s time to waste...”

He snatches the basket off the table and digs through, in search of a needle and thread. He grabs a small sewing kit inside, cracking it open and pulling out the needle. It’s long and sharp, silver metal heavy in his hands. *Thank God he’s not a vampire.*

“Is it going to hurt?” Dream stutters out, feeling that things are going all too fast.

“Um, he can’t really tell us if it does...it would if he was awake.” Sapnap says, trying to thread the string in the needle hole. His hands shake endlessly, and he groans in frustration. Dream plucks it out of his hands and threads it through as best he can.

Sapnap mumbles a small thanks before turning to face George’s resting body. He places a calloused hand beside the wound on his arm, wincing at his own unsteady hand.

“Dream...” Sapnap says shakily.

“What’s wrong?” He stutters.

“You need to hold both sides of the bullet hole together.”

Dream stares, wide-eyed, swallowing hard.

He knows there’s no time to waste, so he slowly approaches the figure and looks down into the bloody mess of George’s arm.

Sapnap takes Dream’s hands and positions them on either side of the skin, motioning as he pulls his hands together. “L-Like this..see?”

“Yeah. Yes...okay.”

He doesn't feel ready. He gently rests his palms against George's shoulder.

Dream watches, heart leaping into his chest as he watches Sapnap pierce the needle into George's pale, fading skin. He laces the thread through the seams of his wound like fabric, pulling together the ends of the bullet wound, stretching his skin to close the flaring wound. Dream presses gently, pulling George's skin like putty beneath his hands. It feels violating.

It takes a few minutes of tense silence.

The candle-light flickers frantically with Sapnap's gentle breaths, sweeping over the stitches. He gently pats down the sides of the skin, making sure it's tight.

Sapnap's brows are knitted with fear and frustration. He's scared he fucked it up as he pulls his hand away from his work. When he steps back, Dream takes it as a sign he can step back as well. The stitches stay, skin unmoving as his chest rises and falls with his shallow breaths.

"I think it's done." Sapnap says breathlessly.

He pats the wound dry with a wet towel before taking some gauze and pressing hard on his arm. He wraps it securely with several layers of bandages.

Sapnap finishes wrapping the top layer around George's upper arm. There are small pink spots blooming on the bandage, blood visibly seeping through the first layer of band-aids. The bleeding is slow, making him sigh in relief.

"It looks good." Dream assures quietly. For a moment there's no sound but the night critters outside Sapnap's open windows.

"Thank you." Sapnap murmurs.

Sapnap moves to George's neck, eyeing the wound uneasily. A long trail of dry blood streaks from the puncture. He takes a wet cloth and wipes it off the porcelain skin.

“What...happened?” Sapnap asks. He doesn’t look up from his friend but he pauses the process for a moment.

Dream’s unsure how to respond at first. *Is he even going to believe me?*

Shame drowns him once again as he relives the moment. “We were stuck in that cell.” He starts.

As he continues, Sapnap begins cleaning the wound and searching for the right bandages and herbal treatment. “I was weak and starving...Schlatt put him in with me in hopes I would bite him and kill him.”

Sapnap doesn’t blink, eyes open and concentrated on the body in thought. He digs through the basket beside him for chamomile.

The flowers are in a jar to keep them fresh, Dream assumes. The human plucks over half of them between the pads of his fingers and places them in a bowl to crush with water.

“And...I bit him.” Dream mutters, hating how the words sound on his tongue.

Sapnap’s breath hitches, his movements halting for a moment. Though he already knows, it’s hard to hear it spoken.

“...but he didn’t die.” *I hope. God, I hope.* “We agreed on it. I needed it to muster the strength to get us out, and I-I didn’t have enough blood for it before. We were so close to escaping, when we ran into...”

He trails off.

Sapnap crushes the flowers into a paste of water and petals, spreading a dollop around the twin wounds. For good measure, he puts some around the bullet wound too. He gently presses a bandage to the treated bite, praying it will heal how he wants it to.

“You bit him.” Sapnap says. “You bit him to save you both.”

Dream nods, afraid of his tone.

After a few more minutes of cleaning the dirt and blood off his more minor scratches and injuries with the towel, he's finished. Dream never looks away, as if his gaze alone could ensure George's survival. Sapnap wordlessly cradles his body.

"That's...admirable? Of you both? Shit...I don't know how to feel. He was brave for letting you do that." Sapnap says, so quiet Dream is unsure if he was meant to hear it at all. It sounds timid, like he knows this isn't exactly how he wants to say it.

"I didn't want to hurt him." Dream manages to say, throat feeling itchy.

Sapnap lifts the unconscious body off the dining table, shuffling over to the couch and gently placing him down, propping a cushion beneath his brown curls.

"I know."

Dream follows anxiously, trying to keep his distance but failing as he practically looms over Sapnap's shoulder. "He...should be stable...now we just wait for him to wake up." The ravenette sighs, speaking quietly. "I'll be back to treat you."

Sapnap leaves to remove the gloves and wash his hands, leaving Dream alone with George. The tap runs in the background of his ever racing mind.

Dream traces his eyes over his lover's resting figure, breaths looking so faint that his chest hardly rose at all with them. Even with his mussed, dirty hair, bruised and torn ivory skin all over, and his slightly pained expression, shown in the slight pinch of his eyebrows, George is still a pillar of divinity in Dream's eyes.

As Sapnap re-enters the room, Dream doesn't turn to look his way. "Can I hold him?" Dream finds himself asking, eyes still fixed on where George is laid down. "Or would that, like...be bad for his recovery or something?"

Sapnap huffs lightly beside him, but it sounds more fond than malicious or teasing. "As long as he

stays elevated and laid down, he should be fine. Be gentle, though.”

Dream is already standing, shuffling his way over to George as he responds. “Okay, okay, promise.” He breathes out.

Dream stops in front of the couch, and looks down at George. Seeing the state he’s in like this, it causes swirls of so many painful emotions in his ribcage to curl around his heart. It’s a thorned vine inside him, one of regret, concern, self-hatred, wishes for an outcome that didn’t result in George in *this* condition .

He carefully scoots George’s legs to bend, and gently tilts his body on his side as he climbs behind his figure, taking great care to not fall onto the cushions too abruptly, lest he, God forbid, somehow hurt George *more* than he already has. Once he settles comfortably behind him, he gently pulls George’s back to lean flush into his chest, and wraps his free arm, the one he’s not using to cushion his own head, around George’s waist to pull him closer.

His head rests just over George’s hair, and he wishes that George was just asleep, so that he could wake him up with gentle nudges and tell him that he was going to go wash his hair for him, make it clean and beautiful again, so that it matches the person it belongs to.

If he concentrates hard enough, he thinks that he can feel George relax just the slightest bit against his chest. A gentle, warm breath of air swoopes across his torso.

“We need to fix you up, too.” Sapnap says, breaking the moment.

“But what about your concussion?” Dream asks, turning to acknowledge him.

“There isn’t much we can do about that. I’ll need to get some rest once I’m sure you’re both okay.”

“I don’t need-”

“Just have a seat over here, Dream. *Please* let me help you.” Sapnap says sharply.

Maybe he feels like he needs to make up for what happened. But...we wouldn’t be here without

him.

Dream groans as he carefully gets up again, and takes a stiff seat on the loveseat placed before the sofa. Sapnap retrieves the basket from the dining room table and sets it on the floor beside them.

Sapnap scoots to sit across from Dream on a stool, facing him. The vampire is noticeably taller, not by too much, but it's enough to make the human visibly nervous. But still, he picks a cotton ball out and dips it in some water from a dish set on the couch footrest.

Sapnap wipes the grime and dirt off Dream's knuckles and wrists as gently as he can manage before applying more of his healing herbs and honey to treat the burn of silver cuffs. It hurts with every gentle tap of the cotton wad, but Dream tries hard to sit still despite the younger's obvious patience for him. Even though he knows blood would be much more beneficial, he accepts the treatment.

"Why are you so nice to me?" Dream asks suddenly. "I don't need you to treat my wounds like this..."

Sapnap doesn't look up from his ministrations, his face scrunching in confusion. "It's not that big of a deal."

"But it *is*." Dream groans, frustrated. "I don't get why you're being so nice...I a-almost, maybe *did* kill George and I've been nothing but a problem for you, and I-" He babbles on, verging on hysteria, having finally admitted to the worst case scenario.

"Stop that." Sapnap scowls, and presses a little harsher into Dream's wound, making him tense up at the sting. "You never know how to let other people care for you. It's even more obvious with George."

Sapnap looks over at their friend on the couch, looking somber. Dream follows his gaze, and his eyes soften at the sight.

Sapnap looks back, and gently pats more honey over one of Dream's wounds. "It's time to forgive yourself, Dream." He says finally, voice soft. "I forgive you. He...forgives you too."

We don't know that. Dream thinks bitterly. *Not that I would deserve it.*

Dream goes quiet. His tongue feels twisted in his mouth, as if there's so much to say but he can't manage to organize his thoughts. He wants to apologize. He wants to say he's sorry for everything, but his throat burns with what goes unsaid.

As much as Dream wants to be more compassionate and open to Sapnap, his hard-headedness is something that can't simply be pushed aside.

He watches idly as Sapnap wipes away the blood of his wounds, wrapping bandages around his arms. He moves to reach Dream's larger stomach and leg wounds from the silver blades.

It stings like hell. It stings but he thinks maybe he deserves it, a sort of punishment for all wrongs he's committed in the past. Sapnap cleans his wounds meticulously, moving quickly and quietly as if it's routine. Perhaps Sapnap had to do this often, considering George would probably often be wounded when they would hang out. At least, before he met Dream.

Sapnap finishes wrapping the last of the bandages around Dream's stomach, taking the gauze and orbiting the roll around his torso, his arms lifted in the air to give the other space to work.

Many minutes pass before Sapnap pulls away. "Alright. Get that shirt back on." He humors.

Dream scoffs. "As if you weren't enjoying the view." He mumbles jokingly. The joke passes just as quickly as it arrived, pointlessly. It *is* comforting, though, as if maybe there was a bit of normal still to be had after everything.

Sapnap stands to clean up, washing his hands and putting the supplies away. Dream shrugs on the torn and dirty dress shirt as the ravenette fetches a glass of water for him.

A whisper. "Thank you, Sapnap. For..."

He rakes his hands through his hair, disturbing the strands. It's suddenly hard to speak, as if this is the most difficult thing he's ever had to do, even after fighting a bloodthirsty dictator and nearly facing death. And, in Dream's personal opinion, those things were much easier to do than to accept the fact that he may have needed to depend on anyone, especially a human. He doesn't know *how* to thank him.

The words catch in his throat unpleasantly, as if snatched away by something. The words go unsaid as Sapnap eyes him for a moment. Dream thinks he sees hesitance until the human opens his arms, leaving room for an embrace.

Dream sets down the glass gratefully, and pulls Sapnap into a hug that says everything he can't say with words. It's quick but tight, and he hopes the younger can feel the affection even if he's shit at showing it. The human's embrace is warm and comforting in his frigid, painful state.

He doesn't want to let go, he wants to selfishly hold onto possibly the only human he has left. But good things wouldn't be good if they lasted forever, so Sapnap steps back.

"Of course, Dream." His smile is contagious, and for once the corners of Dream's lips tip upwards, too, not laced with mild discomfort as they had been before.

"I'm going out." Sapnap says, after a couple minutes. He grabs a coat off the hanger by the door, shrugging it on.

"Why..? It's so dark out." Dream questions in a small voice.

"I need to get you some rabbits. You need the blood to heal, right?" Sapnap asks, adjusting the cuffs of the coat.

"Yeah...but you don't ha-"

"Dream." Sapnap stops him, grabbing some shoes. He flashes the vampire a smile. "It's okay. I'll be back as soon as I can."

With that reassurance in mind, he bids the raventette goodbye, as the human sets off into the night with his gear. Dream returns to George's side in an instant.

Time is so much more cruel when it's spent waiting in silence.

George has been unresponsive for the past half hour, and Sapnap still isn't back yet. *The idiot can't just learn how to catch one damn rabbit without making it a complete circus, probably* . But then again, Dream can't be too upset about that considering he probably wouldn't even be able to catch one himself right now.

It's the dead of night, after all.

The ceiling fan of Sapnap's living room hangs tauntingly over him, stagnant and almost looking over him in a way that feels like he's being mocked by it the longer he stares. Wind weaves its way through the room and out the window it came from, making him shiver slightly. Dream swears he can hear the wind whisper '*look what you did*'. But then again, he tends to have a very aggressive subconscious and that is definitely just himself feeling remorseful without any outlet to put it to.

Each second that passes where Dream can feel a slight stutter in George's breathing, a hair falling over his forehead that the blond brushes back, or anytime he swears he can see his boyfriend's fingers twitch, it seems to only make Dream more anxious.

Because... *what if George really never wakes up?*

He can hear George's pulse so clearly, especially when he's this close to him. It's all he can hear, outside of his own soft breaths. There is always a pause slightly too long, and Dream worries, before he hears it again.

Thump thump.

It sounds so small. So delicate. He's scared it'll just slip away in his hands.

Dream looks down at the human's face, taking in his features without shame. His skin definitely looked more lively now, instead of the pale and sickening tint that was plaguing it before.

He brings a finger to gently brush over the tip of George's nose, and lightly trails it up his nose bridge, between his eyebrows, then back down. He does it again, slower. His finger then trails to the outside of George's face, following his jawline before resting under his chin, before retreating back to rest on George's chest.

"I miss you." Dream finds himself whispering.

The only response is silence, and George continues to lay there in ignorant, unconscious bliss.

“I miss you, George.” He says it again. “Please come back.”

His voice is twisted with desperation, somberness he wishes would bring George springing awake. He wants George to flutter his eyes open, and laugh that airy giggle that makes Dream’s stomach do flips.

“I feel so empty without you.” He admits to nobody. “How am I...I don’t know how to *be* without you...”

His throat tenses. “This is all my fault. I should have found another way to save you. I didn’t want this, I-I didn’t want you to-” He chokes on his words in a silent sob, and swallows thickly.

“I’ll do anything you want if you come back.” He buries his nose into George’s neck, annoyed shoving away the instincts that prod him in the back of his head. “I’ll do anything for you. I’ll eat more of that...that stupid fucking ice cream, o-or cook you every meal you want, or-” He stops himself in a snuffle. “I don’t give a shit, just... *please*...”

Caught up in his emotions, Dream clutches George closer, praying that Sapnap doesn’t come back now lest he see Dream in such a pathetic state.

He cries in silence, body mostly drained of all its energy and leaving him to mostly be reduced to trembling than actual tears.

Dream nearly chokes when he feels a dainty hand rest over his own on George’s chest.

He thinks he might’ve gone crazy.

His eyes snap open, and immediately says with a deep rasp in his voice, “*George?*”

Oh my God.

George whines lowly, eyes hardly fluttering open when he speaks. “Dream..? Are we...why are we in Sapnap’s house?” He squints against the soft lighting.

Dream exhales, then trembles more, but not because of grief - because of pure, unfiltered happiness.

“Am I dead?”

“ *George !*”

The relief washes over him like a tsunami, rocking him to his core. It feels unreal. George is *here*. George is *alive*.

He leans over George and immediately starts bombarding him with quick and messy kisses on his face, uncaring of how self indulgent it is, because *holy shit George is alive, George is okay. Thank you, Sapnap.*

He can’t stop, he runs his hands over George’s arms till he reaches his hands, grabbing them and kissing each as if to confirm he’s alive. He’s proven right with his immediate reaction.

“Ew, Dream-Dream stop! Get off me!” George says fondly, pushing his face away with his good arm.

“I thought you were dead!” Dream cries, pulling him towards his chest. “You were out for so long...”

“I-I’m here now...” George says. “Oh, fuck.”

George winces as he moves his arm to sit up, legs draped across Dream’s lap. “Wow...so, he really did shoot me.” He murmurs, eyes running over the bandages uneasily. Suddenly, his gaze snaps up towards Dream.

“Oh my God, are you hurt?” He asks frantically. The question surprises Dream, who meets his gaze with raised eyebrows.

“*Me* ? Are you kidding?” Dream scoffs. “No no, I’m okay...I’m more worried about *your* state. I...really thought you were gone for good.” Dream whispers the admission, running a hand along George’s good arm. Their faces are close.

George tsks, reaching up to wipe tears off Dream’s face. “I’m alive aren’t I?” He replies lightly, trying to ease the worry evident in Dream’s tone.

“Thank God...we brought you here after you passed out...Sapnap treated your wounds as soon as possible.” Dream says, placing his hand over George’s. “He saved your life.”

“Wouldn’t be the first time.” George says quietly, lowering his hand to rest in Dream’s. “Where is he anyway?”

“Went out to fetch rabbits for me.” Dream breathes. “Should be back soon.”

“I see. That’ll heal you nicely.” George relaxes into Dream’s side, and smiles a little.

Seeing him smile just makes Dream want to cry all over again. Tears spring in his eyes, but when he tries to blink them away, they roll down his face. He shakes his head with embarrassment, trying to will the wetness on his cheeks away.

“Dream, why are you crying?” George says gently.

“I’m just...so happy.” Dream whines, grabbing George once more and gently pulling him into a hug. “Can I kiss you?”

The brunet immediately reciprocates, throwing his arms around the vampire’s neck.

“Please.” George says quietly.

George leans in to connect their lips in a soft, slow kiss. When they part, George looks at him with concern. “Your poor teeth...”

Slim fingers timidly trail a small path back and forth over the nape of Dream’s neck, brushing his nails faintly over the skin on each downstroke. He runs his other hand’s fingers over Dream’s remaining, more human teeth, prodding past his lips. His eyes are liquid concern, spilling over in his gaze on Dream’s teeth.

It’s obvious with his light touch that George is still incredibly weak, his fingers hardly applying any pressure at all. It fills Dream with a *need* to make George better, make George stronger, to make him happy again. The human pulls his hands away.

“I’m so sorry.” Dream apologizes over and over, pressing his face into George’s neck. “I’m sorry, George. I shouldn’t have done it. I’m sorry.”

“Dream...we’re out. I’m here, with you, and that’s all I care about. You didn’t do anything wrong.” George says quietly. “It’s okay.”

Dream slows his breathing down, breathing slowly. With his head so close to George’s neck, his instincts are running hyper in his mind but he pushes them away. Despite all the time George spent stuck in prison, he still smells like eau de cologne. He relaxes a little, George rubbing soothing shapes into his back, tracing his shoulder with his nails.

“Dream.” George says softly. Dream only clutches him tighter in response. “Dream, look at me.”

Reluctantly, Dream loosens his grip around George and leans back. George meets his eyes, and Dream loses his breath for a moment at the pure love in George’s expression. George is looking at him as if he’s the most beautiful painting in the world, one that needs to be taken care of delicately and placed in the most perfect display.

George’s fingers trace along his jawline, eyeing the scratch marks on his cheeks with an empathetic look before meeting his eyes again.

“You didn’t do anything wrong.” George whispers.

Dream looks away. “I know that.”

“No, Dream. I’m serious.” George says again. He gently pulls Dream back to look at him, giving him a firm but caring gaze. “You didn’t do anything wrong.”

Dream is silent. His lips part as he maintains eye contact, forcing himself to do what George wants. And seeing the gentleness in George’s eyes, he breaks.

He collapses into George’s arms, taking deep, shaky breaths. George’s arms wrap around him once again, silently reassuring him with gentle trailing back and forth.

“I’m so scared of messing this up.” He murmurs into George’s chest between snuffles. “I want to be perfect for you I- I want to be as perfect as you are...how can I even do that? You know I’m not good at all of this...I’m just scared that maybe one day...” Dream sinks a little further down. “...that maybe one day you’ll realize how much of a mess I am.”

“I’m far from perfect, Dream.” George responds easily. “You can’t hold yourself to this impossible standard for me. I love you the way you are.” George pauses, then huffs playfully. “Even with all of your weird blood-vampire-murder stuff.”

“You.” Dream laughs shortly.

“Me?” George quirks a brow.

“You’re an idiot.”

“Yeah, well you like me, so.” George teases, giggling a little. “Besides, you think *I’m* perfect? I’m one of the least ideal boyfriends in existence. I shot you. Even if I wasn’t a bad boyfriend I’m still a weirdo, nobody really *chooses* to hunt vampires.”

“Well, maybe.” Dream says, rolling onto his side. “I guess nobody else knew about your hunting stuff, and that’s a pretty hard secret to keep in a relationship.”

“Well, Sapnap knew.” George points out.

Dream groans. “Of course he did. That dumbass would be friends with anyone if they so much as held a door for him once.”

“Hey, don’t make fun of him.” George teases. “We’d both be dead if it wasn’t for him.”

“Yeah, guess so.” Dream sighs. “He definitely went about things better than I did.”

“What?” George asks, laughing lightly at the claim. “You literally went through torture to get me out of there, I think you did more than needed, actually.”

“Yeah, but Sapnap just seems like...so much more considerate than me, I guess.” Dream fidgets slightly. “I don’t understand how you can be friends with someone like him, and think I’m just as good, let alone better.”

“I never said you were better than him.” George jokes. “I’m just not really looking to get in his pants.”

“George!”

George laughs for a moment before regaining his composure. “But seriously, Dream. I love Sapnap too, but it’s not the same.” George breaks into laughs again softly, if not slightly awkwardly. “He can’t wake up next to me every morning and make me feel like the luckiest man in the world. He can’t give the perfect kisses and warmest hugs...” He sits up, words sincere.

He puts both hands on Dream’s jaw, framing his face in his hands. He can feel the rough, light stubble and scars beneath his fingers. He leans in slightly. “He can’t love me like you do. And I love Sapnap a lot, but it will *never* be the same as the way I love you.”

Before Dream can kiss him, a voice sounds behind them. “*George?*”

George spins around and faces a stunned Sapnap, holding two rabbits by their feet. His nose is red, eyes brimmed with tears. He looks like he’d been crying.

George laughs lightly, face flushed. “Sapnap!” He cries, jumping off the couch and running to his

best friend, while Dream hurries out a warning about how he should be more careful since he's recovering.

Sapnap quickly sets down the rabbits before catching George in a tight hug, stumbling back. "Holy *shit*, you're alive!" He cries.

They hold each other tight, years of their protectiveness of each other pouring out. Sapnap does what Dream had, running his hands along George's back as if to confirm he's really there. "Oh my God...oh my God..." Sapnap says breathlessly, shakily.

George buries his face in Sapnap's neck, injured arm weak around his neck. He smiles into his chest. "You're okay! I was so worried when I heard about what happened to you."

"*Me?* What-? This is my fault! I'm *so* fucking sorry I got you into this mess, George. I-" Sapnap starts, voice choked.

"What is *with* you two? Stop *apologizing*, I'm just happy you're alive." George pulls back breathlessly. Dream smiles, watching the two interact. A warm feeling spreads through his chest knowing the three of them are safe and together. Feeling a little awkward, he crosses his arms.

"I'm happy *you're* alive. You were out for nearly two hours." Sapnap says softly.

"It's okay. I'm sorry...I'm okay." George assures him. Dream can't fathom why he's apologizing as they let go of each other.

"How long ago did he wake?" Sapnap asks Dream, removing his shoes finally.

"A few minutes." Dream responds.

"Can...do you want anything to eat?" Sapnap asks. "Tea maybe? I-I can go out and get some of the noodles you like from the mar-"

"Sapnap! I'm fine!" George scolds lightheartedly. "The market isn't even open. It's past midnight. You don't need to do anything."

“If you stress any more you might die from a stroke.” Dream points out gently. “You...You haven’t relaxed in hours.”

Sapnap sits on the couch, placing a hand on his forehead. “I-I’m just... I’m just glad you’re okay.” He mumbles. “Are the stitches hurting?”

“*Stitches?*” George gasps, looking at his arm. He runs his fingers along the stitches he only just noticed, pulling together the wound. It’s rough under his fingers.

“I’m sorry, I didn’t know what else to do.” Sapnap says tiredly, wincing.

“No, this is perfect! Thank you so much,” George beams. “I may have bled out if it wasn’t for you.”

Dream and George take a seat on the sofa beside Sapnap, who runs a bloody hand through his hair. “Really?”

“Yeah.” George huffs with a relieved smile. “I think you might have actually saved my life...thank you.”

“Yeah, yeah whatever.” Sapnap smiles wide, lowering his hand from his hair.

The air is stagnant but comfortable. Nothing needs to be said and for a moment it’s just the three of them, revolving around each other, swept with the overwhelming relief that comes with George’s awakening.

“So, you two are okay?” Sapnap prods a little.

“You’re the one who treated us.” Dream says.

“No, like, you aren’t upset with each other right?” Sapnap clarifies quietly.

“No, of course not.” George says sincerely. “I wouldn’t be here if it weren’t for you two. I’m...beyond happy.” A big smile forms on his face, relieving the tension in Sapnap’s chest. “We’re okay.”

They talk. They talk about everything and nothing. Though their bodies beg for rest none of them move to leave every time a discussion comes to an end. A new one starts.

It’s a lot more than words. It is the smiles, hand gestures, light laughs, and lighthearted arguing. It’s the moments to savour the company of each other. They drink up conversation and fond stories as if they were parched.

It’s early hours of the morning by the time the conversation finally dies out. They’re all exhausted beyond belief. It goes unsaid that after tonight things just won’t be the same ever again.

“I should shower. Then I’m heading off to bed,” Sapnap sighs. “I think you guys need some time alone, but...I’m here if you need me?” He says sheepishly. “You guys can sleep on the couch if you want. Just...no funny business. I want a clean couch tomorrow.”

George grabs him and pulls him into a tight hug, burying his face in the ravenet’s chest. He doesn’t take the clear opportunity to scold him for the innuendo, instead he speaks sincerely, “Thank you, Sapnap. Thank you so much.”

Sapnap hugs back, grip tight around his shoulders. “I love you, George. So much.”

“I love you too.”

“You said it!” Sapnap beams.

George just hums in response.

They disconnect and Sapnap turns to face Dream.

After the turmoil of the past day, it feels like they’ve connected more on an emotional level. They both feel guilt bubbling over, but they don’t say anything about it.

“Thank you for saving me, Dream.” Sapnap says fondly, offering his hand for Dream to shake.

The vampire pulls him into a hug, lifting him off the ground slightly. It catches Sapnap off guard, but he reciprocates. “Of course! Can’t just leave you to rot. George couldn’t live without you.”

“Neither of you could.” Sapnap chuckles as they let go. “Good night, you two. We can talk about what to do next in the morning.”

“Good night, Sap.”

“Get some sleep, man.”

The human trudges up the stairs, footsteps echoing through the house. The gentle click of his bedroom door is all that’s left before the house rings with silence once more.

Conversation slips easily past bitten lips, they talk as if nothing had happened. Dream lingers in the kitchen with the rabbits Sapnap had hunted for him, turning away from his boyfriend as he drinks their blood. After everything he doesn’t want to be seen as a vampire again, drinking and conquering the bodies of innocent creatures in order to survive.

The rich liquid courses through his veins, healing his wounded flesh and deprived stomach. The gashes in his legs, wrists, and stomach heal fast and painlessly, leaving fresh scars in their wake. George observes from the couch, watching the skin sew itself together.

Dream joins him back on the couch once he’s sure all the blood is off his hands. By now Sapnap’s bedroom lights are out.

It’s just the two of them.

“The scars look good. Hot, even.” George jokes, to break the silence.

He’s worried it’ll strike a sensitive nerve but his worry dissipates at Dream’s tone. “Shut up.” The vampire laughs out, face flushed.

Dream tucks his legs in, facing George on the couch. They take the moment to stare at each other's features, shamelessly raking over their faces. Dream takes it in like he's just met George for the first time all over again.

"I missed you." Dream murmurs. "Was hard to talk to Sapnap about you. We talked like you weren't even there."

"I guess I wasn't." George shrugged. "I didn't hear anything."

"But...I mean *really* not there."

Like you were dead.

"...That must've been scary." George mumbles. He can't think of anything else to say. "M'sorry."

"It's not your *fault*, I just...it was scary." Dream admits. "Sorry, you probably don't want to keep hearing about how dead you seemed."

"No, it's okay." George can't help but let a small laugh slip. "It...well, even I thought I was dead. I thought I died at the prison. When I woke up here, I thought maybe it was just a...a vision or something. I dunno." He snickers.

"I didn't even think of how scary that would have been for *you*." Dream says seriously. "It was selfish of me to just keep thinking about...my mother." *I couldn't stand being left again.*

The wind blowing through the window by the couch is loud in his ears. George is quiet for a few tense moments. "It's *not* selfish. She shouldn't have left you when you needed her most." He says, face concentrated. *Cute.*

"Well...she was afraid."

"She was being *irrational*. She shouldn't have left you. She should've known you wouldn't hurt

her. She should have waited long enough to see the amazing person you would become...I'm sure she would be proud of you."

"Oh God," Dream plants both hands on his head. "What...what would my mother think of me now?"

"Dream..." George says gently.

He drags his hands down shamefully over his face. "She was afraid of me, George. She was afraid I'd hurt her...b-but I wasn't going to because I *loved* her, and I thought she was wrong to leave me because I-I would never hurt someone I loved so much but...look at what I've done to you.." His shoulders shake slightly, head ringing with Sapnap's words. His chest rises and falls all too quickly, as if it's caving in. His lungs can't keep up with the pace, making him feel lightheaded.

"You- You need to relax, Dream. Take a deep breath..."

He's losing it.

Forgive myself...how could I?

After everything I've done...

"I'm a *monster* , George!"

"*Stop !* We can't do this again..." George begs, grabbing Dream's shoulders (though gently on his injured one despite it being fully healed), desperation coming through his cracking voice. "Breathe, please breathe." He soothes, scooting closer to the vampire in order to place a hand on his cheek.

Dream has always found it hard to work himself down from a frenzy.

A fit of rage, a panic attack, instincts coursing through his animalistic brain and shooting to his hands with the surge to do *horrible things*.

But George has always made it easier. Made him feel like he could be in control again. Even when they first met, Dream had finally been able to feel some sort of self control for the first time since he was turned.

He finds that in thinking about this, his breathing has slowed. He focuses on the anchor in front of him, someone who's taught him patience and control like no one else. He doesn't even realize the way he's clawing at his own face till he feels George's hands around his own, pulling them away from his face.

George gives him a moment, eyeing him with concern. For a moment he says nothing. He opens his mouth to speak, but is promptly interrupted.

"I'm sorry." Dream blurts.

"Why?" George asks softly.

"Because...I'm freaking out. I'm freaking *you* out. I'm fucking this up. I'm sorry you have to deal with me."

"No, you aren't." George says. "After everything, a *panic attack* isn't going to drive me away."

George slips a cold hand past the collar of Dream's barely unbuttoned shirt to trace his hands over the scar on his shoulder. It makes him shiver.

It's nothing sexual. George gently feels the healed skin under the pads of his skinny fingers, breathing quiet and small breaths against Dream's chest.

At the same time, Dream reaches up to thumb at the twin bite scar on George's neck, fingers resting on his jawline.

Feeling their mistakes physically manifested beneath their fingers on the skin of their lovers is hard. It's scary to think they're the ones who did this.

Dream winces at the bite, feeling the healing skin beneath his fingers. His touch is gentle, knowing it's still recovering. "But...I hurt you, George. And...when you needed me, I hurt you again. And then...I *let* you get hurt again." Dream laments bitterly. "I shouldn't have been so careless."

The moonlight casts light on George's face, reflecting in his teary eyes. He looks up at Dream with a gaze that could break him.

"I don't know how you could have me, now. I'm undeserving of your love." He continues. He knows he's feeling sorry for himself but he can't help it.

"Stop it. Of course I'd have you, idiot." George stops him, removing his hand and intertwining theirs together on the windowsill. "I let you get hurt too...I-I just froze like a fucking coward and let it happen to you...I'm so sorry."

"You don't need to apologize, there was nothing we could have done." Dream meets his gaze with sharp eyes, light color even lighter in the moonshine. "He had me good."

"Neither do you. You never did anything wrong. I'm going to keep telling you that until you believe it. You can't keep *blaming* yourself...you got us out of there." George smiles a little. "*You're* the reason we got out of there. There's a future for us, thanks to you."

"You give me too much credit." Dream trails his free hand to cup George's face. He wants nothing more than to kiss his tears away, hold him close and let the rest of his life pass them by. "I couldn't have done it without you. You gave...you *give* me hope."

Silence fills the air, clearing the clouds of the storm. The tears spill over George's eyelids, falling down his cheeks and staining his skin.

"You're the best thing that's ever happened to me, Dream." George whispers. "I don't think I've ever told you that before."

This feeling is new.

There's a newfound warmth in his chest. He's never been anyone's best *anything*. It feels good. It feels right. He feels compelled to say something to top it, somehow, as if he'll be able to make George feel any better than George just made him. He can't stop the smile forming on his face, eyes getting teary. *Again*.

“I’m gonna marry you one day, George.” Dream whispers.

“You are?” George asks, eyes wide, genuine smile on his face. He laughs, letting the tears roll off his cheek and down to the peak of his chin. “That would be nice...but that isn’t allowed. We-We can’t have a wedding.” He says gently.

“Sure we can. You, me, and ...Sapnap.” Dream grins, reaching up to wipe the tears off George’s cheeks. “He’ll be the best man.”

“Since it’s just him, he’ll also technically be the worst man.” George giggles.

Dream laughs, a little too loud. George smiles at him, catching his breath to speak again. “How...how do we always end up talking about Sapnap when we’re like this?”

“Like what?”

“I don’t know...In love.” George shrugs, face flushed.

“We’re in love?” Dream asks, quiet. Neither of them really know why he sounds so surprised, after what they’ve been through. He wants to hear George say it again anyway.

“Well, *I’m* in love with *you* .”

He’s in love with me.

Something Dream thought would never happen. Nothing could have prepared him for the wild journey they’ve been on to get to this point, but he couldn’t be more grateful for it. For *this*.

“I think...I’m in love with you too.” Dream says breathlessly.

My Very Own Garden

Chapter Summary

thank you all for sticking with us! christmas came early >:) this has been an insane project and I'm so thankful for all of you <3 the kudos and comments have been so encouraging and sweet. we really cant thank you guys enough. i hope this last chapter does it justice.

I'm so grateful I've been able to write this with my best friend @vanilluvcoffee (on wattpad and Instagram) and its just been so incredible to work on this! i don't know what else to say but thank you all for everything

join our discord server! <https://discord.gg/K8cufQt5kc>

we're gonna keep it alive when working on our next project :] this fic is gonna get spinoff oneshots and also we're starting a new fic (hint: boxing au)

as always, enjoy :D love you all

It had been three weeks since George was dumped.

He felt defeated. Heart broken. Absolutely shattered, yet anything but surprised.

He was in the midst of preparing for a masquerade party being hosted in the town square. After a painful breakup with his obviously straight boyfriend (he knows from how often he'd come home with lipstick smeared across his lips and down his neck, smelling like perfume, spending more time out of the house than with him) who wanted to experiment , he'd chosen to try getting out of the house after sulking for so long.

Worried for his safety after being with someone who had the means to expose him, he'd been trying to stay safe by staying home.

Sapnap came over a week ago to help him clean up around the house. He was appreciative of the non-judgmental attitude towards his typically tidy and organized area, but felt bad about its condition regardless. His friend actively worked not to act pitiful towards him. It almost felt worse.

He wasn't sure what he was looking for if he's being honest. Attending parties wasn't really his thing, but it was something to do that was different than his normal schedule. Maybe he could distract himself, maybe he could become someone that other people would actually want, he

wasn't sure. All he knew is that he didn't want to spend another second wallowing in his house or obsessively hunting vampires until he could hardly stand.

Too many nights were wasted coming home far after his desired bed time, unable to sleep from the wounds and aching. He would wake up, sulk, hunt, and sleep.

There wasn't room for anything else.

He placed his porcelain mask on his face, sliding it up his nose bridge. It felt ridiculous, but it was nice to not be seen. Blending into the crowd like a cob in a corn field.

He stepped out of the house, darting his eyes across the wide field to Sapnap's. His house was lit, so he knew the other was home. He would have invited him, but if he ended up meeting a guy it probably would have gotten awkward. He decides its best if he goes alone.

He took a familiar path down the street and around the corner towards the town square. The stars danced in the sky above him, and he walked with his head up to observe their choreography.

He finally made it to the large stone fountain. Lit lanterns and calm music hit his senses. The chatter of townspeople drowned out any thoughts he tried to muster. He found himself irrationally irritated as he tried to relax a little, taking a seat at the bar counter on an isolated stool, feeling it sink under his weight.

He scanned the crowd with a gentle squint, scrutinizing the men under his gaze.

Most that came to the weekly night gathering were young adults, around his age and looking to marry.

A man with brown hair and miniscule height passed him - not his type.

Another, taller man caught George's eye in the crowd, but of course, he was speaking to a woman in a large hat with a feather sticking out the top. It probably cost more than his entire outfit.

His hope dissipated. What kind of gay man seeks a suitor at a public event? It's shameful to even

be out like this. *He thought to himself.* If they found out what I was looking for, I'd surely be killed.

...I need a drink.

Giving up, he drummed his fingers on the table, well trimmed nails hitting the wood with a clicking sound. He couldn't think of what to order. This shit is unaffordable.

He was just thinking about leaving before a voice, low and raspy, caught him off guard...

Eight months later

"Hey, baby." Dream kisses the top of his head, entering the room.

"Hi, Dream." George greets fondly, leaning into the touch.

"What did you need? You called me over here."

"Can you put this shelf up? I'm too short."

"At least you admitted it this time." Dream humors, taking the plank from George's hands. "Where do you want it?"

"That wall." He points to a spot by the window. The trees outside rain leaves and stripped seeds on the roof and window, pattering as they roll off and hit the ground to start a new life.

George used to be scared of the woods.

The woods are deep and foggy, so dark inside there's hardly a difference between the day and night. Shivers crawl across your arms and dew stains your clothes no matter how thick an umbrella you bring or coat you wear. Dead trees litter the land, fallen over and grown over with moss and mushrooms, revenge on the selfish, thirsty roots that hog the land's nutrients. The thick trees swallow your screams so no one will find you when the vampires get a taste of you.

Knowing he was *so likely* to disappear was haunting.

He'd created a habit of walking in irregular patterns knowing vampires could hear his footsteps. He knew if he walked in an organic way, they'd mistake him as part of nature. As soon as he walked in regular intervals, he was a dead man. Little habits stayed with him all this time.

But the woods he'd spent so long in, hunting and running from these blood-thirsty creatures, are less scary with Dream. They've finally settled into a warm and welcoming circle of trees by the river.

Over the course of the last 5 months, they've built a new house in the woods.

Not far behind Sappnap's at the edge of town, they constructed a new place entirely of their own hard work. Sappnap helped cut and bring wood, paint, and ideas to their new property.

Thanks to Dream, it really only took 3 months.

The rest of the time was spent moving George's old stuff and filling their house with randomly collected items.

People did ask him why he was moving once his neighbors heard. All he would tell him is that he needed a change of environment.

That was also true. There were too many bad memories in that old house.

This one they've made, though, it's built of hope and healing.

Dream found George loves to pick up pieces of nature. He often grabs pinecones and smooth stones off the ground, only to hand them off to the vampire. By the time they come home from walks, his hands are full of bits of nature, dirt staining his hands and seeping between the cracks of his skin. The forest outside practically grew inside their house, breathing organic life into their home.

Dream installs the shelf, laughing to himself at the fond memory as he sets a jar of dry moss on top of the newly installed storage. It's slightly askew, making the jar slide. He adjusts it accordingly, lining up the rest of the jars of rocks and pinecones once he's finished.

George brings down a pot from the wall. "I should probably start cooking before Sapnap gets here for dinner." He says. "I bought his favorite."

"Of course you did."

"Sorry I can't serve *blood* at the table, Dream." George tuts. "We're having mutton. I got it from the butcher's shop you lied about working at."

"Nice." Dream responds flatly.

George removes vegetables from the fridge and washes them in the sink, sputtering water cleansing the dirt and soil. Dream sticks his hands in the stream of water the other is working with, washing his hands over the vegetables.

George frowns at him for it, though not genuinely upset.

They work meticulously around the kitchen, fetching herbs and mushrooms from their young garden, cutting vegetables, and putting together the meal with time and effort. Dream learned how to cook for George's sake (not without struggle, seeing as none of them- including Sapnap- could cook for shit), and they replaced all their silverware with copper pots and pans. Blackout curtains keep the house dark, but well lit when needed with candles and cheap chandeliers from Sapnap's storage. Everything is half assed, but they make it work.

Dream still feels guilty sometimes, but George does what he can to help him understand that this is what he wants. It changes everything, but that's okay too.

George is happy. Dream is happy. *That's what matters*, George thinks, running the vegetables under the water to wash the dirt from his lover's hands again. Dream kisses the top of his head once more before leaving the room to move their cabinets around for the fourth time today because he can't find a way to arrange them that's satisfying.

Sapnap arrives half an hour early, with a knock eager enough to make the door shake.

“You’re early.” George says, fighting the smile on his face. “Since when?”

“I was excited to see the house.” He says defensively. He holds up a fancy glass bottle, sloshing around the contents. “I brought whiskey.”

“The only way to get in.” George jokes, letting him in. He closes the door behind him with a familiar creak and click.

They embrace, Sapnap patting his back. “How have you been, man?”

George seems to think about it for a second before a gentle smile appears on his face. “Pretty amazing, actually.” He says.

Sapnap hasn’t heard that in a long time.

He smiles. “Well isn’t that just peachy.” He says in an overly-sweet manner, unable to let such a genuine moment slide. George scoffs lightly.

When they break apart, he wanders around the living room, eyeing the newly decorated walls. “Wow...”

“What?”

“Nothing, it’s just...you’ve never really decorated like this.” Sapnap says. “It’s so... *you*. ”

“Dream has an eye for design. He did most of it, really.”

They travel through the well lit room into the kitchen, where Dream is laying the table for three. “Sapnap!” He grins, straightening.

“Dream!” Sapnap pulls him in for a hug, setting down the bottle on the dining table.

They pull away eventually. “What’s for dinner?” He asks, shrugging off his coat. He places the jacket on their clothing hanger, which teeters slightly from the weight. George straightens it with a gentle hand.

“Mutton.” George replies, unable to help his smile as he sees Sapnap’s face light up.

“Mutton!” He exclaims. “I’m excited.”

Dream bends down and slips the large dish they’d been cooking with into the oven, accidentally closing the door with a loud bang. *Oops.*

He wanders over to join them by the small dining table. George and Sapnap sit and talk as Dream lays out three glasses, one already filled with water. It doesn’t really do anything for him but he doesn’t like being without a glass when they play drinking games.

George pops open the whiskey bottle, pouring the honey-colored drink halfway up his glass.

“Already?” Sapnap smiled. “At least save it for *dinner.* ”

“Can’t. I can’t stand you sober.” George jokes, bringing the glass to his lips.

Dream sips his water in disinterest, while Sapnap begins to pour himself a glass as well.

“ *So... ?*” Sapnap grins. “What’s it like living out the runaway dream? Living in the forest, where no one can hear the loud, steamy-”

“It’s been really great.” Dream cuts in comically, making George giggle. “We’ve had a lot of time to decorate and just...spend it with each other.”

“That’s sweet.” Sapnap says genuinely. “I’m glad I could visit. Now that the house is done, I’m gonna be here all the time. You can’t stop me.”

“We can’t have that.” George snickers. “But yeah...I’m happy too.” He smiles softly into his cup, taking a slow sip. “What about you, Sap? How are things?”

“I’ve been pretty good.” Sapnap admits with a cocky sigh. “Still just doing hard labor but it’s paying fine. My mom brought my little sister into town for a bit so I’ve been spending time with her since she’s staying with me. Staying single and loving it, fending off the ladies, as I do.”

“You are not loving it.” George says flatly.

“True. I’m not loving it.” He says reluctantly. “But- Oh, wait, you guys heard about the new mayor, right?”

“Yeah. Quackity.” Dream hums from across the room. “Wilbur was gonna be next but then...y’know.” He draws a line across his neck with his thumb to prove his point.

“I still can’t believe that happened.” Sapnap says. “He punched me! I didn’t even get to exact my revenge, he just died!”

“I’m sure he regrets punching you, Sapnap.” George assures with a small giggle.

“Very much.” Dream adds.

“Still sucks.” Sapnap tsks.

“Hopefully with the government under new management this town will be more tolerant of things.” George says, even though it won’t.

Not vampires, everyone thinks, but it goes unsaid. Not every vampire is so humane. Dream is an exception. Gay relationships? Not a chance.

“Maybe.” Sapnap mumbles.

The ding of the oven rings out into the house.

“Hold that thought.” George says.

He saunters into the kitchen and reaches into the oven, pulling out the tray. The gravy sizzles, drowning the cloves of garlic and herbs in the tray. The warm, delicious scent wafts into the dining room.

“That smells good.” Sapnap comments, as George brings it into the room. He sets it down in the center of the table.

“Thank you.” George smiles pridefully. “We made it with the vegetables we’ve been growing.”

“Man. I’ve been living here my whole life and still never committed to trying to grow a garden and you guys did it in like, a month.”

George carves away at the meat, placing a slab on his plate with a slice of buttered french bread. “It’s not *that* hard, Sap.”

Dream sips his water, idly watching their conversation as George and Sapnap eat the dinner they so-lovingly made together. A warm feeling fills his stomach.

“Wow, this is really good. I’m impressed.” Sapnap says. “When did you learn how to cook?”

“I dunno.” George shrugs. “Dug up some of my mom’s old cook books I still had for some reason, and here we are.”

“You gotta teach me sometime.”

“I’d love to.”

Dream looks between them for a moment before deciding to insert himself.

“I learned how to cook, too.” Dream interrupts. “I don’t even eat human food.”

“That is impressive.” Sapnap admits with amusement. “So you just cook for George?”

“Pretty much.”

“You guys are so cute it’s disgusting.” Sapnap rolls his eyes, cutting a slab of meat off the piece on his plate and sticking it in his mouth.

“Absolutely repulsive.” George agrees, sarcastically.

“So gross.” Dream adds.

Dream honestly had initially been nervous about the dinner, but he found that as soon as Sapnap showed up, the group’s warm chemistry returned near instantly. It had been a while since they’d all hung out in a non-life-threatening setting, and he only realized how much he missed it when they finally got the dinner ready. The rest of the meal runs just as smoothly, lighthearted conversation and arguments traveling between the trio.

By the end, George and Sapnap have finished most of the mutton. Dream sets down his now empty glass of water.

George picks up the tray and their dirty dishes and walks into the kitchen, placing the dishes in the sink. He walks back into the room and sits at the table across from Sapnap.

Sapnap pats his stomach. “Gonna have to unbuckle my belt for this one.”

“Woah, woah, woah.” Dream chuckles, holding out his hands.

“Too far, man.” George says, feigning disappointment.

“I meant it’s because I’m full, idiots!”

Dream and George break into chuckles and giggles, shaking their heads.

Once Dream recovers, he suddenly asks a question. "Oh, did you know I could turn into a bat?"

Sapnap gapes at him. "No way. Show me."

Dream grins. "Okay, okay. Prepare yourself."

He stands up and walks next to Sapnap by the dining table, clearing his throat. For a moment, nothing happens.

"What-"

Then, a puff of smoke appears, erasing him from sight. When the smoke clears, a blonde bat is left hovering in the air with little flaps of its wings. Sapnap gasps. "Holy *shit* !"

Dream flies overhead, landing on the table, making Sapnap flinch slightly. "Can it- can you still talk?" He asks Dream, but then turns his head to direct the question to George.

George shakes his head nonchalantly, being used to Dream's powers at this point. "No, he's just...a bat now."

Dream flies towards Sapnap and lands on his sleeve, which the human abruptly pulls away, startled. Dream falls off his arm and lands on the table.

"Oops." Sapnap says, embarrassed. "Sorry, I wasn't expecting you to fly towards me." He laughs.

Another puff of smoke reveals Dream, sitting on the dining table, rattling the dishes and light hanging dangerously close to his head. "You're actually dumb."

"I said I was sorry!" Sapnap exclaims with his hands raised defensively.

George laughs loudly over the table with one hand over his face. “Why were you- you looked like you were getting attacked by a ghost or something.” George says between giggles.

Sapnap groans and stabs his fork back into his steak and chews the piece he takes with a sour expression. “Sorry I’m not used to bats flying at my face.” He says through a mouthful of food.

“My feelings are hurt forever, Sapnap.” Dream whines as he clambers off of the dining table from the awkward position, doing his best to not break any dishes while he does. “Your bat-phobia is not accepted here.”

Sapnap chuckles, rolling his eyes. “I’m sorry, I’m sorry, okay? I’ll try not to throw you off next time.”

“So mean.” Dream murmurs jokingly, walking into the kitchen. “I’m gonna do the dishes.” He says.

“Let me help.” George says, following him.

George pushes in front of him, beating him to the sink, grabbing the torn sponge and starting the tap.

“Wow, George, very cool.”

“I’m doing you a favor, here.”

“Just...do half, and I’ll do the rest later.” Dream says lovingly, planting a hand on his shoulder.

“No.” George responds casually, scrubbing away at the dishes, making methodic circles to scrub away the residue. He washes them off with water and sets them aside as he goes.

Dream steps behind him, planting his hands on George’s hips unexpectedly. His grip is gentle.

“George.”

The brunette smiles sheepishly, slowing his scrubbing. “What?”

Dream plants a hand on George’s collar, lovingly trailing down his chest, feeling beneath his shirt but above the fabric. It tickles a little.

George giggles. “What are you doing?”

“Let me do the dishes, *George*. ” Dream smiles, drawing out the ‘o’ in his name.

Tan hands suddenly dip beneath his shirt hem, nearly pulling up.

“ *Wha-* ”

Before George can finish his exclamation, Sapnap’s voice hits both their ears. “Y’all are freaky.” He says lightheartedly.

Dream backs up with a warm chuckle, turning to face Sapnap in the kitchen doorway. The ravenette laughs at George’s flushed expression.

“I’m joking.” He clarifies. “I just came for more whiskey.”

He tips the bottle to the lip of his glass with a small clinking noise, pouring it into his glass.

George scrubs the last dish and lays it on the drying rack, drying his hands off on Dream’s shirt (who frowns at him once he’s done rubbing all the water off on him) and taking the mutton dish to the fridge, where he slots it next to some lemonade and a jar of mushrooms on the bottom shelf.

He walks out of the kitchen, into the living room.

“So, um, how’s George’s arm been doing?” Sapnap asks suddenly. The question is so abrupt, it sounds as if he’d been waiting for George to leave before asking. Dream turns to him, lips parted in surprise.

“Oh- it’s been good. Really good. It healed pretty much completely.” Dream says truthfully. “That stitchwork you did really saved his life.”

Sapnap swishes the liquor around in his glass, a guilty expression on his face. “Good, that’s...good.”

They both seem to picture the nasty scar left in the bullet’s wake, guilt pressing on their chests like weights. “It’s not your fault.” Dream manages, wondering if that’s what Sapnap is thinking about.

“I know, I was just...just wondering.” Sapnap says. He sounds like he’s convincing himself, but seems self assured enough.

Even still, Dream walks over to him and wraps an arm around the shorter’s shoulder, pulling him into a half-hug. “Don’t worry about it, man. He’s doing well. I promise.”

Before Sapnap can respond, music interrupts them. A smooth, steady tune bursts to life from the creaky piano.

They both turn to the doorway from the kitchen to the living room, walking in to see George’s little performance.

The fluent notes of the piano fill the air with the rich music. The pure and unfiltered music, even if off key due to the untuned piano, is pleasant and calming in their ears. The old, creaky, off-set piano notes arguably add to the music. George plays the keys fast and professionally, hands dancing across the keys. Black and white hit the strings with a strum of elegance.

George stops, seemingly disappointed with his practice performance and pursing his lips in thought. Dream and Sapnap have heard him play the piano many times but it never fails to surprise them. A polite round of applause makes him scoff.

“Hey, do you guys want to go out or something?” Sapnap asks, sliding next to George on the creaky piano bench. “We could have a picnic. Get Dream some dinner too, maybe...?”

Dream smiles at that, flattered that they would consider that for him.

George thinks about it for a moment, closing the lid of the piano with a soft creak. *We're safe if we're together*, he thinks. He looks out the window at the dimming light of the sky.

"It's really late. I mean, we just ate." George shrugs, not denying. "Sounds fun though. I would like that."

"It could be nice." Dream agrees. "The weather's been really pleasant."

"Then it's settled. Let's go out." Sapnap sets down his now empty glass of whiskey.

They pack a basket of fruit, biscuits, jam, and soda, even though they both know they'll probably only drink the soda. George packs some hunting gear in his old backpack in case Dream needed help catching food while they were out too. He takes some stakes since they'll be in the woods.

Just in case.

Dream walks into the living room where George is putting on his shoes, seeing the stakes stuck out of the top of the bag, having been too large to lay flat. "George..."

"Hm?"

"You know I'll protect you, right?" Dream asks softly.

"Oh...I know." George says quietly. "I trust you. It's just in case. I don't want to feel helpless, you know?"

"Okay, baby." Dream combs an affectionate hand through George's hair before fetching his own shoes. Sapnap comes in and opens the front door, stepping outside. The couple follows him shortly.

When they step out it's a little chilly. Wind weaves through their hair, leaves sticking to their clothes as they rain from the trees that hang overhead, shaken by the breeze. An acorn falls on Sapnap's head, which cracks George and Dream up more than it should as the ravenette rubs the

point of impact.

Autumn wind is cold and dewy, the air ripe with petrichor. Trees tower over the trio, a spectacle of leafy pillars standing tall that reach for the sky. It's peaceful and blissful, darkening sky only encouraging the home-like atmosphere with more critters joining the symphony of hums and midnight birdsong.

The woods always seemed dangerous until he moved in with Dream. Considering the countless hours they'd spent in Dream's treehouses or on simple walks on familiar, not-so-scary trails, the woods just began to grow less and less binding, like he *needed* to be in it if he wanted a sense of purpose. He had someone else to make him feel needed, now.

The woods weren't only dangerous, they were *familiar*. That never changed, it only seemed to grow and blossom into more of a home to him than a place for his tedious and murderous work. He thoroughly enjoyed walks in the woods given the chance.

When he wasn't trying to hunt vampires, he was able to enjoy the otherworldly sounds and cold of the forest, buzzing with life in the dead of night. He finds it hard to break the habit of walking in a strange pattern despite Dream and Sapnap's normal pace, which would surely give them away to any hungry vampires anyway.

Dream seems to be enjoying it just as much, the crunch of dead leaves beneath his feet echoing as he trails behind George and Sapnap, looking for piles of dead leaves to step on just to hear the satisfying crackle.

"Dream seems happy out here, too." Sapnap says, watching him over his shoulder.

"Yeah, I mean he always lived out here but I'm just glad we can share that, you know?" George smiles at his own feet. "Building this house together has been really amazing. He's gotten better at controlling himself, and we have precautionary stuff, just in case...you know."

"Yeah."

"Look!" Dream's voice cuts into their conversation as he runs in between them, pointing in the distance. "Me and George went skinny dipping there!"

"Wh- Dream! That was *not* skinny dipping!" George flushes with embarrassment. "We were

wearing clothes.” He mumbles.

Sapnap bursts into laughter. “Oh my God,” A gasp. “You guys went *skinny dipping*?”

“No,” George corrects. “We swam.”

“You don’t know how to swim.”

“Yeah, I do.”

“Okay, prove it.” Sapnap says, as they approach the small pond, setting down the basket. “Jump in, right now.”

“Yeah, George. Jump in.” Dream teases.

George frowns. “No. I don’t want to wet my clothes.”

He turns to face them, bringing his eyes away from the pond, but shocked to find Dream is shrugging off his jacket, shoes discarded in the dirt. Sapnap is smiling so much his cheeks must be sore.

“What are you doing?” George asks, exasperated.

“Swimming.” Dream responds, simply. He’s grateful that Dream stops stripping at his rolled up trousers and under shirt (as that view is reserved for him), but he’s concerned nonetheless.

“We are *not* swimming.” He replies haughtily.

Sapnap begins to throw his clothes in a heap on the ground as well. “Come on, it’ll be fun!”

“I just did laundry.” George tries.

“I’ll do it this time.” Dream says.

“You have to wait before swimming after eating.” He tries again.

“That sounds like bullshit.” Dream chuckles.

“I don’t want to swim.”

Dream smiles gently. “*George*, please? It’ll be fun.” His smile is coaxing, warm. His voice drops to a whisper, words trapped between them. “I won’t let anything happen, promise.”

George grits his teeth, and defeatedly sighs. “I...fine.” He unbuttons his coat. “But if some *critter* eats our food-”

He’s cut off by a loud *splash*. Cool, crystal water drops hit his skin from the impact. Water settles as Sarnap submerges from the water’s surface. He gasps, laughing out loud. George wipes his face with a pale hand, peeling off his jacket.

It’s just cold enough to be uncomfortable for a swim as George rolls up his trousers. Dream is preparing to jump into the water, as Sarnap swims out of his way to make room. With another large splash, he disappears into the water.

George breathes deeply as Dream brings his head above the water, “My splash was bigger.” He boasts.

“Was not.” Sarnap responds. “Mine was huge.”

“That’s ‘cause you’re fat.” Dream says, as-a-matter-of-factly.

“Then why the hell are you bragging about your splash size? *You’re fat!*” Sarnap shouts, dragging Dream’s head underwater.

Their affectionate bickering continues, George's selective attention now on the water he lowers himself into. Cold pricks his skin, raising goosebumps on the scope of his arms and calves, running over every mole and scar.

The water is cool and dark, moonlight from the dimming sky reflecting on the surface of the water, pearly highlights present on his own features. He notices Dream's eyeing him when he turns to face his friends.

"What?" He smiles, suddenly feeling like he has to cover himself up.

"Nothing. You're...you're just as beautiful as you were that night."

George rolls his eyes, embarrassed. "Don't *lie*. Just...swim with me."

"Not lying." Dream mumbles softly, before reaching an arm to George. George takes it gratefully, drifting in between his wingspan.

Sapnap is distracted from their PDA trying to scoop up a frog on the side of the pond. George drops his voice to a whisper. "I still haven't learned how to swim, you know."

"I know, but it's fine. I'll hold you and you can pretend you know how."

"Whatever. Do not tell Sapnap."

Sapnap turns back to them, an excited look on his face, wading over. His hands are wet and clasped together, dirt on his fingertips and under his nails. "Guess what's in my hand." He says excitedly.

"It's a frog." George says pointedly. "I saw you catch it."

"Aw, man." Sapnap opens his hand. Dream and George lean in to hover over his palm, a large olive-colored frog resting in the center. George holds his hand next to Sapnap's, and the frog hops to it, making Dream flinch.

"So cute." George cooes.

He eventually puts it back in the mud, with help from Dream taking him to the edge of the water.

It's mostly play after that. Teasing, splashing, laughs come easy to them knowing the group is safe and happy in numbers. A couple times Dream tries to coax George into swimming into the deep end but he puts an end to it quickly. Sapnap isn't an idiot (most of the time), he knows George can't swim, but he doesn't continue to tease about it. It seems unnecessary.

Eventually the three settle onto a rock that leaves them waist deep in the water. They look up, watching clouds roll past.

"I missed hanging out with you both." Dream says.

"I'm happy I could visit. I'll bring my sister next time, too." Sapnap says. It makes Dream happy to hear that Sapnap isn't fearful for her safety, at least not enough to avoid bringing her to meet them. He'd found that he's pretty fond of meeting new humans that George is friends with.

"Yes, now that the house is done you can visit us whenever." George says, closing his eyes, leaning his head back against the side of the rock. "We would love that."

"Absolutely." Dream breathes out.

Now, late into the night, the night sky dances with a surfeit of bright stars. George thinks maybe he can see a planet in the distance, but it's hard to tell. He sighs, cold breath present in the crisp and cold air.

Several minutes of comfortable silence pass. George damn near falls asleep.

"I think I see a shooting star." Sapnap gasps, pointing a finger into the sky. This catches the attention of the couple, both pairs of eyes following Sapnap's pointer finger.

Sure enough, a bright beacon of light is soaring through the sky, like a person sprinting through a crowd, eager and ready to burn up and fade out with a person's wish.

I wish we could stay like this forever, George thinks.

“Maybe it’s an alien.” Dream jokes softly. “Looking for a home to settle in.”

George considers this. He considers how maybe someone out there is still looking for a home, place to stay, person to love, and he realizes how lucky he is to have gotten a happy ending despite all odds.

Finding a home in Dream was the best thing that has ever happened to him.

He thinks he might cry at just that, but it feels far too dramatic and embarrassing. Instead, he stands up, feeling as if he’s getting closer to the sky. *Let’s go home*, he thinks. “I’m getting kind of cold.” He says instead.

“We can head back.” Dream assures, sitting up as well. “Let me get some food. You guys just start putting on your clothes and getting dry. I’ll be back in a few. Start heading back if I’m not here by the time you’re ready.”

“Okay...be safe.” George says gently.

George pulls Sapnap to his feet as Dream picks his shirt off the ground, buttoning it up halfway and wandering off into the dense thicket.

Their conversation fades off as the sounds of the woods flow through his mind. He’s on the lookout for a deer, hoping to get a deer or moose that could sustain him for more than a month or so. He doesn’t like bothering George about hunting for animals since it feels like an eternal reminder of his less-than-human state.

He squints slightly, struggling to see in the dark. Each step of his boots against the forest floor elicits the soft crunch of dead leaves and fallen twigs.

He tries to catch the scent of a large, unassuming animal to drain. His pupils blow wide open, filling out the color of his irises.

Man, I'm hungry. He can feel his saliva building at the thought of sinking his teeth into some animals.

As he's walking, he's suddenly stopped cold, dead in his tracks, at the sound of a sickening *crunch*.

He steps back cautiously, wearily looking at the pile of leaves he just stepped in. *The fuck was that?*

He slowly approaches and gently brushes some leaves out of the way with his boot and is shocked by what he sees.

Techno's body.

Bare bones, nearly. His dirty clothes are the only indicator that it isn't some random skeleton. Dream stumbles back, startled.

The body is rotting, it doesn't smell *bad*, but it smells strong.

It feels almost sad to him. It *is* sad. As scary as it is, he knows he's the cause for the end of the life of this random vampire. He doesn't want to feel bad, but he kind of does.

It's frustrating.

He looks around wearily before looking a little closer, crouching down to the level of the body.

An ecosystem of bugs, moss, and usnea have grown over his bones and managed to make a home for themselves in his body.

Bones that once produced blood for Dream's enjoyment and recovery are now rotting over, months and months after the life had already been stripped away.

It's unsettling, but that doesn't make it less fascinating to him. He watches a beetle absentmindedly

making it's commute to the other side of a long bone. Tension and guilt unravel like the flaking bark of a dead tree, peeling strips of wallpaper in an old house, releasing the bounds of his hurt after so long.

It's not like he doesn't *still* feel guilty, but remembering everything that had happened all that time ago, it feels less like Techno's life had gone to waste.

He straightens and looks around for a moment before picking a particularly pretty branch, decorated with dead seeds and leaves, off a tree. He twirls the twig around in his hand, looking it over for a moment.

He scoops leaves onto the body, covering the living system and placing the branch on top. It feels like some sort of fucked-up closure, but he accepts it.

Sighing, he trudges past the mistake of the past and seeks out a new victim.

When Dream gets home, stomach full and veins running with new blood, hands wet from his river wash-down, Sapnap and George are having a hushed discussion on the couch that quickly disperses once he enters the house. He only catches a hushed "Dream's" in their conversation before it ends. He walks into the room.

"Hello?"

"Dream, I'm glad you're back." Sapnap says.

"I was getting worried." George says, relieved. His face is red, a nervous smile spread across his lips.

Maybe that's what they were talking about. Just...me coming home.

"I'm heading out soon," Sapnap says. "I should get back to my sister before it's *too* late."

“It’s the dead of night. I’m sure she’s asleep now, but yes, you should head home. I don’t want her to be alone.” Dream says.

“Should we walk you home?” George asks, considering the dangers of the night carefully.

“You don’t have to,” Sapnap responds. “I can take care of myself.”

“I insist.” Dream says. “I’ll take you. George can stay home.”

George frowns, standing from the sofa. Sapnap follows suit. “No,” George says. “I want to come with. Besides, you just got home. Let me take him.”

Sapnap grabs his coat off the coat rack once more. “I don’t *need* either of you to come with. But if Dream’s taking me home, I don’t think I can stop him.” He laughs lightly. “You should get some rest.”

George sighs. “Sap, I-”

“George, it’s a quick trip, I promise.” Dream smiles. “I’ll be home before you’re asleep, I’m sure.”

George is reluctant to agree, but he does. He hugs Sapnap tightly, sharing plans to meet up again before the following week. “It was good to see you. I’ll talk to you soon.” Sapnap assures.

“Thanks for coming, Sap. I really hope you enjoyed.” George says sincerely.

“Absolutely.” Sapnap smiles. “I loved it. Sleep well, okay?”

They wave George goodbye, door closing with a familiar creak behind them as they begin the trek to Sapnap’s. The woods are dark like Dream likes it.

“Big strong man- gonna protect me from vampires, are you?” Sapnap nudges his shoulder.

“That’s why I’m here, isn’t it?” Dream grins.

Sapnap's laugh trails off as he sighs, cold breath puffing out of his mouth. The white wisps of fog fade away into the air as he tilts his head back, looking up at the stars and moon decorating the sky above.

"It's a nice night." Dream observes.

"That it is." Sapnap agrees. "Far too cold for a swim, though. I'm still feeling the chills."

Dream hums in acknowledgement.

There's a few times Dream thinks he hears the scuffle of feet or the breathing of a thirsting vampire but he's wrong, and it makes him look stupid when Sapnap watches him whip around like a wild animal to seek out any assailants.

It's a relatively short walk, but the night is cool and calm overhead as they make light conversation.

"-That is *not* what I said." Dream shakes his head, laughing.

"You did! You said 'I've been a good angel', and I was just like, 'what the fuck?'"

"You're dumb." Dream says flatly.

"No *good angel* would say that." Sapnap quips.

It feels familiar as the two of them come over the peak of a muddy hill. "I think I see it." Sapnap says.

Sure enough, the tip of his roof and hanging lanterns with their dimming light peek over the edge of the hill. Dream nods. "Me too."

They stop at Sapnap's porch, where he walks up the path and turns to face Dream, waiting at the end of the driveway.

"Thanks for dinner, Dream. Get home safe."

“I will, th-” Dream begins, when the front door opens and hits Sapnap in the hip. “Ow.” He mumbles, before facing the little girl responsible.

The girl, no more than ten years old, rubs her eyes, frowning. “Why are you home so late?”

“I was with George and Dream. They’re always out late.” Sapnap shrugs.

Dream stares at her, eyes wide and unblinking. He can only assume she’s Sapnap’s sister. His palms feel sweaty, all of a sudden.

“This is Dream. He walked me home.” Sapnap says, gesturing to Dream with a short laugh.

“Hi, Dream.” She says softly. She wipes her hands on her floral nightgown. “Thanks for getting my brother home.”

“You’re welcome.” He says. “It’s nice to meet you...?”

“Julia.” She supplies.

“...Julia.” He finishes.

“You too.” Julia says to Dream with a small smile, before turning to face her brother. “I’m tired.” She complains to Sapnap, tugging his sleeve.

Sapnap laughs. “Okay, let’s go. Good night, Dream.” He waves back at his friend as he pushes her back into the house, pressing a hand to her back. “Give George a juicy kiss from me!”

The door slams behind them and Dream laughs at the cutoff, then laughs a little more from the rush. *She wasn’t scared of me!*

Feeling giddy, cold wind suddenly rushes past him, reminding him to head home. *That must be George, sending me some sort of sign.*

Warm sheets and an even warmer hand pressed to his chest coax him into the burrow to head back home. Wide smile plastered to his face, he turns and begins walking back down the hill, through the mud, and into the woods.

Dream wanders into their bedroom, having finished putting away the dry dishes. In the pitch black he can faintly make out a sleeping figure, curls of hair spread out against the cream colored pillows.

He treads lightly, creaky floorboards shifting under his weight in a way he's memorized good enough to avoid the loudest spots. He methodically moves around, putting on his pajamas. When he reaches his side of the bed, he sits on the well-loved mattress, dipping it a little.

George stirs a little in his sleep, feeling the disruption. Dream goes to apologize before he's pulled down by a strong arm, forcing him on his back. He's met with a squinting George, who goes to close his eyes again.

"Hello." He says softly. "Didn't mean to wake you. M'sorry."

"Sleep." George utters in response, voice heavy with sleep. His face relaxes.

Dream doesn't really sleep. He can, but there isn't a point in doing so since what really gives him energy is blood. He sleeps for the sake of getting to share that safe space with George but other than that, he doesn't usually feel inclined to.

Knowing this, George shifts a little closer. He presses his cheek to Dream's collarbone. "Please."

How could I say no to that?

Dream moves to get comfortable, pulling the sheets over them and lowering them enough that George can breathe. He lets out a long, peaceful sigh, letting his head fall against the pillow. Wind sounds come through the slightly cracked windows, shifting their heavy curtains slightly. Distant calls of owls and bugs fill his mind with whitenoise as he looks at their peeling wallpaper, smiling

to himself.

Wrapping his arms around George, he kisses the top of his head, the older already fast asleep.

Morning light peers into the room shyly through the thick curtains, casting the wall with a warm glow that illuminates the dancing dust in the air. George blinks away the sleepiness in his eyes, looking out into the swaying leaves that susurrate outside the slightly opened window.

When he moves slightly he's met with an arm that wraps around his shoulder. Dream is already awake.

"Good morning." Dream murmurs.

"Dream..." George whines into Dream's chest.

Dream hum-giggles. "What? What is it?"

"Mmm... *Dream*." George groans again, pressing his cheek into Dream's collarbone, running a lazy hand down Dream's bicep.

"*What?* What is it, George?" Dream chuckles. He reaches to hook a couple strands of George's hair with his index finger, loosely twirling it. "Tell me."

George doesn't respond, and instead rolls to lay flat on top of Dream, reinforcing the notion that he does *not* want to move anytime soon.

Dream smiles languidly, and tenderly wraps his arms around George's back and pulls him closer to his chest. He presses his nose into George's messied bed hair, and murmurs, "Don't wanna wake up yet, baby?"

George hums into his chest, as if to say '*no*.'

“Okay...” Dream drawls, voice still low with post-sleep drag. “...well, do you wanna just *lay here* forever?”

George nods against Dream’s chest.

“M’kay...not even for breakfast..?”

George wraps his arms around Dream’s neck, readjusting his head slightly just to stop moving again.

That’s a no, then.

“Not even for some grilled cheese with extra butter....some apple juice...” Dream mumbles, lovingly brushing through George’s hair with his fingers. “...and some fresh strawberries we picked from the garden yesterday...and we can cuddle on the porch while you eat, if you want.”

George groans, finally lolling his head to the side to make half-lidded eye contact with Dream.

“Y’don’t even eat that stuff, how’re you even making me hungry?” George complains feignedly.

“Is that a yes?”

“Yes to what?”

“Breakfast.”

“Mmm...” George closes his eyes in contemplation, then plops his head back to where it originally was before. “Only if you carry me.”

Dream scoffs. “*What?* You’re so *lazy*. ”

“Noooo...” George pouts, nuzzling his head under Dream’s chin. “If I walk ‘m gonna die. The floor is poisonous. Only you can take me.”

Dream rolls his eyes. “You’re so dramatic. ”

Regardless, Dream sits up slowly so as to not disturb George more, and grabs under George’s thighs before standing.

George locks his legs around Dream’s waist as the vampire carries them into the hallway. Even when he reaches to unlock the door, leaving George supported with just one hand, he doesn’t fumble.

As he stirs into consciousness, George smiles at the overwhelming sense of safety he feels like this. In Dream’s arms, half asleep.

George gently leaves a slow, languid kiss against Dream’s neck.

George can feel Dream’s heart rate pick up against his own chest at the simple display of affection. He plants a few more kisses before interrupting himself.

“Are you gonna make my grilled cheese yet?” George asks snarkily.

“Since when did you get so high maintenance?” Dream teases, setting George down softly onto their sofa.

George reluctantly disconnects, laying down on the cushions. “Since you started insisting on doing everything for me.”

Dream huffs and walks over to the fridge and pulls the ingredients out. “I guess I can see your point.” He smiles fondly. George turns on the sofa facing the other wall, falling silent.

George isn’t wrong, Dream *loves* doing things for him. Any chance he got, even if he so much as

mentioned a flower he saw on one of their walks that he liked - Dream would make sure he had ten of them in a vase for the breakfast table the next day.

Dream's feet tap a random rhythm as he hums, and carefully toasts the bread for George's grilled cheese using a skillet. He's gotten a little more accustomed to working near fire, even though it's purely for the sake of being able to make George more kinds of food.

He's about to bring George his plate when he turns around to see him huddled in on himself against the back couch cushion, and he's *crying*.

Dream immediately rushes over and sets the plate down on the coffee table, crouching gently on the couch to wrap his arms around him.

"George...George what's wrong? What is it, baby?" Dream whispers, concern dripping in his tone as the human's small frame trembles under his touch.

George snuffles, and attempts to clear his throat, weak cough escaping his mouth. He weakly bats at Dream's hands, trying to push him away without any actual intention behind his pushes. "Stop, s-stop..." He mutters out. "Nothing. S'nothing."

Dream gently holds him closer, and tucks George's head under his chin in their embrace. Cool tears tickle his neck as his boyfriend falls into the embrace.

"It's not nothing." Dream says softly. "You're crying."

"It's stupid." He huffs.

It's quiet for a few moments, the air filled only with the sound of George's trembling cries and Dream's hand running up and down his back.

It hurts Dream when George is upset.

Dream wishes that nothing could ever make George cry again, and if he could, Dream would make sure of that himself, and do whatever he had to in order to ensure George would always be happy. He'd take that pain upon himself if it were ever necessary.

If only things were that easy.

The best he can do is to hold George, and listen.

And thankfully, George finally whispers an answer.

“I keep...” He takes a deep breath. “I keep thinking about you in that...in that prison.” His words shake as he finishes the sentence.

For a moment, Dream’s heart drops. His grip on George slips slightly, afraid of his own touch. “You mean when I...when I bit you..?”

“No,” George quickly reassures, pulling Dream back in, keeping their bodies close. “No, no...when you were...” He chokes on a dry sob. “Your fangs. Bleeding, screaming, and the knife...”

Dream relaxes. “*Oh.*” And when George is silent, Dream continues. “Does it...scare you?”

The grip on his shirt becomes tighter. “Yes. Yes, it does.” George admits breathlessly. “It scares the *shit* out of me- because what if they find us? What if we’re in that *situation* again? I don’t want to lose this, lose *you*. Every time I think about how I have it so *good*. ..I can’t help but think of when it’s going to be taken away.”

Dream’s hand presses firmer onto George’s back, holding him with more solidity. “Me too. It scares me, too. We’re never gonna be there again. Never...I promise. You’re never going to lose me.”

“I never want to see you like that again, I-I never want to be in that *prison* again.” George whispers. “But...I keep having these nightmares about it. You keep getting hurt in them- *killed* even...or you can’t defend yourself, o-or there’s ones that are horrible, where *I* can’t do anything to help.”

“Nightmares?” Dream asks, concerned. A pit forms in his stomach. “For how long?”

George further hides his face into Dream's neck. "Since...since the day it happened?" He takes a deep breath, then quickly adds, "I'm sorry I didn't tell you. It's been hard. I told Sapnap at dinner...while you were out. I'm sorry."

Dream's. Dream's...dreams. Bad dreams.

Oh. That's what they were saying.

A humorless misunderstanding.

"Shhh, don't be, don't be." Dream murmurs into his hair. "I just wish I'd known earlier. I'm worried for you."

"I know." George says shakily. "I know, Dream." He sighs.

They sit in silence for a while.

Neither of them make a move to get out of each others' hold, and while usually it feels like at some point they want to part when they hug, neither of them seem to want to right now. Their breakfast is forgotten, and time seems to become irrelevant with the fact that George is upset by something. So they stay for a while.

At some point, Dream breaks the spell of stillness over them by leaning away, and cups George's cheeks with his hands softly. He looks George in the eyes, and leans in to press an affectionate kiss to his forehead.

"I want to make it better for you." Dream's words are laced with both love and concern.

"You already are." George says back, just as gently. "You're here."

Dream gives a bittersweet smile. "Of course I am." He pushes a hair behind George's ear. "I'll always be here. Always."

George lays down, and drags Dream down on the couch with him, his face still buried in the vampire's neck. Dream chuckles softly as he tries not to crush the poor brunet as he lands on him. George holds him closer. "Good. That's...that's all I need."

"What about your breakfast? It's gonna get cold."

"Forget it right now."

Dream closes his eyes, and allows the comfort of George's arms to consume him. "Okay."

Time idles away but their embrace never slips.

Things always seem to circle back to moments like this between them after the prison. The easy kind words that pass between them don't get boring, of course, but it's times when they're like this that Dream is truly reminded of how special this is.

How special *he* is.

How special times with silences that feel more fulfilling than any words. Times that feel like the world stops just for them, and allows them to just stay and be real, and it feels like it the first time it happens each time there's a moment like this one.

Dream holds him closer.

George holds him tighter in return. *I know what you're thinking*, the action says.

After a long period of silence, George speaks at a timid volume.

"I hate letting you go."

Dream chuckles lightly against George's neck. "Then don't."

And he doesn't.

"Are you sure you're going to be okay here by yourself?" George asks gently, crouching to Dream's eye level. "Do you need something?"

"No, I'll be okay." Dream smiles sweetly. "I promise. I'm okay."

George adjusts the chains bounding Dream's arms to the broken radiator installed in the wall. He wraps it around his chest three times before clicking the lock shut.

They're glad this hasn't become routinely ritual, but every so often Dream's instincts get bad enough that they need to keep him contained until the wave of savagery washes over him and filters out of his system.

"And you'll tell me if you need something, won't you?" George asks, resting a hand on the side of Dream's face, where he can feel the stubble adorning his jaw.

"You know I will." Dream tilts his head and gazes with a look that could make anyone feel weak, pupils wide and adoring.

George brushes his hair back with one hand and plants a kiss on his forehead. "I'll miss you being with me in bed. It's pretty cold without you there."

"You'll see me again in the morning." Dream assures him gently. "Until then you can cuddle pillows like Sapnap probably does."

"Don't be mean."

"I'm not, baby."

George smiles, giggling lightly. "Goodnight, Dream. I'll see you tomorrow."

“Goodnight.”

George kisses his cheek once more before he stands and walks out of the room, swinging the door closed behind him with a gentle click.

The warmth in the room seems to immediately leave along with George once the door is closed.

The tense silence leaves Dream aching as he can faintly hear the sink running, pitter patter of footsteps leaving the bathroom, the closet door closing, and finally the shuffling of sheets and creak of the old bed frame.

He scrunches his eyes closed, hunger ravaging his stomach and whirling wildly in his stomach like a tornado.

It hurts to have to do this.

I'm the fucked up factor in this relationship. Always ruining good things.

He knows that it's for their safety, for *George's* safety. It doesn't make him yearn for the warmth of his bed and loving boyfriend any less. He squirms uncomfortably, hungering from the blood deprivation.

His stomach growls audibly, making him shake.

He knows he's scary when he's like this. He hates that about himself. Silently, he tries to apologize for being the way he is as if it will make up for the damage he's done.

He wishes he could control the unstoppable urges he gets, that sometimes get so bad to where he needs to be restrained like this. He had tried to convince himself for a long time that his self control would be strong enough to deal with living with a human long term, but at the end of the day, he *is* a vampire. And that means no amount of trying to be human will get rid of his instincts for good.

The restraint is just too much sometimes. And he feels horrible that he doesn't have enough strength to simply ignore it, but after multiple nights of reassurance from George, he finally accepted that, okay, maybe he *does* need a time to just stop restraining himself.

He only agreed to do it if he was completely chained down, and only if he was *absolutely certain* that George would be safe.

And now he's here another night after a few months of the last time they did this.

So, reluctantly, he stops trying to resist his instincts after holding them back for the past few months. The familiar feeling of restlessness and adrenaline already begins to spread across his body.

He hopes the night will go by quickly.

The night does not go by quickly.

Every time they have done this, Dream encourages George to just not worry about him and get some sleep. George tells him that he will, and to take his time getting everything out of his system.

George doesn't have the heart to do that, though. He's only in bed for a few minutes before he finds himself on his feet again, closeby, sitting against the wall outside the room, sitting on the living room sofa, anywhere close enough to be able to hear if anything goes badly in the room.

He busies himself by decorating his maps, cleaning around the house, or just watching the night outside from behind a window.

The need to go in the room, to go and hold Dream close and tell him everything is okay, that he's *not* a monster is almost unbearable sometimes. Because he knows that when Dream is like this, that's not an option. They had both agreed that their best option during these times would be to leave him alone until he's tired himself out.

A few minutes after he had closed the door, the low sound of growling started to become frequent. Then, around an hour later, he hears the rattling of chains against each other, and louder, more animalistic growling accompanying it.

It hits these awful high points where Dream will *scream*, chains rattling the radiator and pressing into his skin as he shakes and struggles to break free at the smell of nearby blood.

The sounds continue for a few hours. George, just like every time Dream's had to do this, struggles to resist comforting him.

After long enough, though, the growling and clinging finally comes to a stop. Dream had finally tired out his instincts.

George is half asleep when he cautiously opens the door, finding Dream slumped over with dark eye circles and one of the chains broken, laying by his side.

He's not asleep, of course he isn't, but he's breathing slowly and raspily. His eyes are trained on the floor.

George approaches slowly. Floorboards creak under his cautious feet, and he knows Dream knows he's here since he's been smelling the human for *hours*. Suddenly Dream looks up, tired, squinting eyes meeting George's.

"I'm hungry." Dream rasps quietly.

"I know, baby." George says sadly, dying to cup Dream's cheek. "Let me see what I can do. Hold out a little longer, please?"

Dream doesn't respond.

George slowly crouches down and grabs the end of the broken chain, wrapping it around Dream's shoulder. The clinking of metal is the only sound in the room aside from their breaths.

Suddenly Dream surges forward, scaring George enough to back away. "Hey." He scolds.

“Just...let me finish this. I’m going to help.”

After a minute, George crouches down and finishes locking him up and reinforcing his security. He stands and opens the door to the room, taking one glance back at Dream. “I’ll be back with blood.”

No response.

Mildly frustrated, George leaves.

When the door creaks open again, the sky has brightened ever so slightly with the rising sun. George steps into the room, cleaned rabbits in hand.

He takes a quiet breath before approaching Dream again, crouching in front of the worn vampire and holding up the rabbit to his face for him to bite into. “Here.”

With only a moment’s hesitation Dream bites into the rabbit’s soft flesh, drawing blood from the open wound.

It’s a messy feeding process as George feels the warm blood pool and seep into his hand, bright red in the cracks of his skin. The quiet patter of blood dripping onto the floor echoes in George’s mind.

Minutes pass as the rabbits get lighter in his hand. Dream finishes and sits up, letting out a sigh of relief, head hitting the wall. Blood drips down his chin and onto his clothes as George retrieves the keys to free him of his restraints.

“Thank you.” Dream says, gratefully.

“Of course. Let me get you out of these, hold on.” George mumbles.

He slides the key into the locks, pulling the chains away from his arms and setting them aside.

Like the trigger of a bear trap, as soon as the chains are off, the jaw snaps. Dream folds in on himself, head in his hands. "George, I'm so sorry."

"Don't apologize, I'm just glad you're okay now."

"*I'm* okay? Jesus, George- I'm a menace. This is far too dangerous. I should just leave when I get hungry, I'll stay in one of my treehouses, I-"

"Stop it." George says gently, coming around to Dream's front. He gently opens Dream's arms and slides into the space between his knees and chest, sitting across his lap. His legs cross over Dream's on the floor. He looks up as if to ask if it's okay, to which the vampire places a hand on his side, indicating as much.

"Look, I'm not hurt. You aren't a menace, you can't keep blaming yourself for something you can't control. At a certain point you need to just accept that *I love you* the way you are." George says gently, wiping the blood off Dream's face with his clean hand. "Enough beating yourself up about it already."

George says it all the time, but he still finds it hard to accept.

"You're too good to me. Who am I to deserve you?" Dream smiles weakly, still self-conscious of the blood on his teeth.

Unbothered, George replies easily. "Yourself."

Dream rests his head on George's shoulder, sufficiently flattered. The call of early morning roosters sing outside the house as the room brightens with dawn.

"Get washed up and we can go for a walk. Feed the horses, if you want to." George says eventually, twirling Dream's hair between his fingers. "I'll run the shower for you."

Moments like this always make Dream wonder if he deserves this at all.

He's been nothing but a burden the entire night. He knows George hasn't gotten a lick of sleep, despite him trying to say he has. But when he meets his gaze, leafy green locking onto his earthy sepia eyes, he feels the love of his flaws reach the surface.

The anticipated harshness in George's voice never comes. The strike to his person never comes. The scrutiny and anger that always made him feel so small never comes. He's never treated like he believes he should be, but he's starting to get used to being loved for once.

It's scary. But it's so, *so* nice.

In place of his dramatic gratitude, he chooses humor: "You'll join me, won't you?" Dream invites, raising his eyebrows.

"Shut up." George laughs warmly. Dream knows he'll consider it.

"You've been writing for so *long*, are you done yet?"

Dream sits up a little, repositioning the pillow behind his back before laying back onto the bed's headboard. "You're so impatient, we aren't even doing anything. You act like we have somewhere to be."

George lolls his head against Dream's shoulder. "I'm not impatient, you've just been writing for like, an hour already. And I want your attention."

The human has clearly been half-asleep since they had laid together a couple hours ago. Dream used to try and stop talking to him so that he would actually get some sleep, but George is stubborn. And if George wants to talk to him, nothing is going to stop him. Not even his circadian rhythm, which definitely includes too much drowsiness for a normal person.

Dream puts his pen down and offers George his hand with his palm up. He immediately takes it and squeezes their palms together, feeling the spark where their skin meets.

"I think I'm done for now. I always struggle with writing the middle parts." Dream groans.

“God, finally.” George whines. He sits up and rubs his eyes with the back of his hand. “Now I have you to myself.”

Dream huffs with a grin, and turns to look at George. “I have *literally* been sitting *right next to you* for the past two hours.”

“Yeah, but...” George places his hand on Dream’s knee and leans a little closer. “Now you’re looking at me.”

Dream’s eyes flicker down to George’s lips, then back up. He unconsciously starts to lean forwards. “True. I am.”

George presses their foreheads against each other, and they maintain eye contact. “I like it when you look at me. It makes me feel special.”

Dream hums a giggle. “Yeah?”

“Mhm.” George smiles softly, and flutters his eyes closed. Dream does the same.

Their lips move slowly together, it’s a kiss of fulfillment. A kiss of real, genuine happiness. There’s nothing to worry about right now, nobody trying to destroy what they have. All of the time in the world has given itself to them, and this moment.

They kiss for a while, and their hands are still interlocked. Dream squeezes George’s hand every now and then, and George squeezes back just as much. It’s a reminder that *this* is real - *this* isn’t going anywhere.

Dream used to hate that he was a vampire when he spent time with George. Instincts were incredibly frustrating for him to deal with, especially since him and George started living together.

But over time, especially after implementing times where Dream will be in a safe area, and can just stop resisting that part of himself, it slowly becomes easier. It becomes less of a constant anxiety, and more of a routine to follow.

Occasionally, yes, if George gets a papercut or, sometimes, when they kiss, Dream's fingers begin to tremble.

But then, George is there, and then humanity seems so much easier to reach.

Like he *can* do this, and no boundaries, rules, or obstacles can tell him that he can't be with a human. Can't be with *George*. And he knows there will be that time, later, where he can safely let go of his control. And after, George will still be there.

Even when Dream is afraid of hurting George, George will also be the reason that he is fearless. He will always be the reason that Dream never stops fighting that fear.

He kisses George a little harder. He wonders if George can tell that he's thinking - he often was very good at telling when Dream was thinking too much.

George hums gratefully against his lips, and kisses back with a matching intention.

They both get lost in it, allowing themselves to be consumed by the feeling of being with each other. Time is forgotten, the weight of the past is left behind, and the anxieties of the future are ignored for now.

Dream pulls away abruptly, chuckling. "Ew, don't use your tongue when I don't even have all my teeth, that's disgusting."

George laughs loudly at the sudden change in mood, covering his face in slight embarrassment and leaning back onto his side, resting his elbow on his pillow.

"*Sorry* , didn't know you were so insecure about it." George teases.

"M' not insecure," Dream rolls his eyes, rolling over to hover over George, and places a chaste kiss on his lips. "I just don't want you to feel gross when you kiss me, idiot."

George gives him a deadpan face, reaching up to flick the tip of Dream's nose. "I seriously don't care, but whatever."

Dream flops down to lay on his back again, reaching out to grab George and pull him into a hug, who maneuvers to get comfortable by resting his head on Dream's chest.

"You're a liar, but okay." Dream mumbles, closing his eyes.

George hesitates for a moment, but then responds with a soft voice, "I would probably put up with anything to kiss you."

Dream huffs, an easy grin spreading on his lips. His heart is on fire. Maybe George can feel its warmth. "Yeah?"

George hums into Dream's shirt. "Yeah."

"I've drank rat's blood."

"Don't care."

Dream rests a hand on the back of George's head. "Kiss me, then."

George pecks him on the lips but it's far quicker than the rest (though not any less loving).

"No, kiss me more." Dream complains.

"No thanks. That's all I needed from you." George grins.

"You use me, George." Dream says in mock hurt.

"You let me." George shrugs. "I don't know why you're complaining when you set yourself up with a pretty face like that."

Dream laughs shortly. The tips of his ears are red. “I can’t really trust what you say since I haven’t seen myself since I was, like, 14.”

“Well, if you need help figuring it out...” George seats himself between Dream’s legs, putting two hands on his face. “You have tan skin, 194 adorable freckles, a little beauty spot on your jaw, pink lips...”

“Okay, that’s enough.” Dream rolls his eyes.

“Green eyes adorned with long lashes, rosy cheeks...” George pinches Dream’s cheek hard, making him frown. “A cute nose that scrunches when you’re laughing. Sharp jaw, little facial hair...”

“That’s *enough*, you’re going to make me fall in love with myself, George.” Dream laughs between his words.

“It’s not so bad. You should try it sometime.” George smiles at him.

Dream gasps dramatically. “Are you saying you’re *in love* with me, George?”

“No,” George manages a serious tone. “I was actually joking this whole time.”

Dream chuckles. “You’re evil.”

George’s eyes flutter shut. “Just to you.” He adds with a sleepy grin.

Dream doesn’t sleep. This is one of those nights he prefers to watch George, and just let his brain run on and on.

The clutter in his brain used to be unpleasant, but now, he’s glad for it. He wants to think about George all the time. George, with his brown curls and scarred knuckles. George, with his slow, shallow breaths and light sleep talking. Cool skin and long fingers and parted pink lips.

Even when every thought Dream has is George, it feels like he can never get enough.

A week later, George is busying himself in the kitchen, humming a nonexistent tune to fill the awkward silence.

“GEORGE!”

Startled, George snaps his head up from the stove where his dinner is cooking, turning to each side. “What? What is it?” His accented voice rings throughout the house. “Are you okay?”

“Look!” Dream stumbles through the doorway, smiling widely. George’s panic quickly dissipates in his chest at the sight of his lover’s happy expression.

After a pause, “What am I looking at?” he asks.

Dream stops in front of him and opens his mouth, pointing to the point in his mouth where his large fangs had once been. “Look!” He says, voice far too loud. “My fangs! My fangs, they’re growing back!”

George squints, holding Dream’s head still with two hands and looking at his mouth. Two small peaks of white poke out from his gums. He gasps softly.

George’s heart flutters. He remembers the horror of witnessing Dream losing them and quickly pushes the thought away.

“Oh my God.” He grins. “Dream! That’s amazing!”

Dream scoops George up in a tight hug, bending down to fold his arms around the shorter, squealing excitedly as he grabs him off the ground and spins in a circle.

George grins till his face hurts before Dream brings him down, laughter dying down.

“Part- Part of me thought they were never gonna grow back.” Dream admits. “I m...just so happy.”

He rests his head on George’s shoulder, bending down slightly to compensate for their height difference. The human’s grip tightens around his torso. *This means he doesn’t feel ashamed of his fangs. He’s happy they’re growing back.*

“I’ll be able to hunt on my own again.” Dream murmurs.

“This is wonderful news. I’m really happy for you.” George says.

A brief pause. “Are you sure that...that you’ll be okay?” Dream sounds fragile.

“What do you mean?”

George can feel Dream shift before answering. “You’re not gonna be bothered if...if I have them again?”

“What? Of course not.” George answers, like it's obvious. To him, it is. “I love you. Of course I don’t care if you have fangs or not.”

Dream sighs. “Okay.”

George holds him tighter. “But you deserve them. I know you wanted them to grow back.”

Quietly, “I’m glad they’re growing back.”

George smiles. “Me too.”

Dream blearily opens his eyes, groaning softly at the dim light of the bedroom.

The one window of the room has the curtains closed, a single beam of light at the end of the room letting in just the right amount of light to see, but not hurt him. George was smart to get curtains, not shutters, they were much more effective at blocking light. It certainly made mornings like these much better.

The vampire shifts his head slightly on the pillow, reaching up to push some stray dirty blond hairs out of his eyes. The movement results in a sleepy whine by his chest, Dream smiles adoringly and places his arm back around the brunet's back. George is facing him, arms around Dream's waist and a leg hooked around his.

It's funny how clingy George gets when he's sleepy, while being so "annoyed" by Dream's constant hugs and kisses throughout their day. The second they settled down for the night, though, George made it his mission every time to not let Dream move out of his grasp.

And Dream loves it.

He can just barely see one side of George's face, the other side smudged into the mattress and his forehead against Dream's bare chest. He can feel the warm, steady breaths on his skin, and his hair pressed to the crook Dream's neck. If he squints, he can count the beauty spots on George's face (as if he hasn't done it a hundred times before).

He loves it when George is like this.

George often worries about too many things, whether he was being a good boyfriend or not, about things the townspeople were hearing about vampire attacks slowing recently, and just worrying about so many things that mattered so little to Dream. So seeing him so quiet, calm, and in his arms, it's one of his favorite things. Because he knows George is okay, George is safe, and George isn't worried about anything right now.

He slides his hand up the brunet's back, trailing over the skin lovingly and brushes up into his brown locks.

The human stirs awake, eyes blinking open sluggishly.

"Good morning." Dream greets. The morning makes his voice rasp with sleep. George closes his eyes in rejection.

“C’mon George, it’s like...noon.” He assumes, looking out the window at the sun.

“I’m warm.” He mumbles.

“I know, but we should wake up soon. You sleep for so long.”

“I think you sleep far too little.” George grumbles.

“Well, it usually feels like a waste of time when I don’t *need* to sleep, smartass.” Dream laughs.
“What will convince you to get out of bed?”

“Nothing.” George mumbles.

Dream hums, pondering for a moment. “Are you hungry?”

“A bit.”

“Do you want me to bring you something so you don’t have to get up?”

“Um...” George blinks awake slightly, sounding a bit guilty. "You don’t have to, but-”

“What do you want to eat?” Dream asks, already moving to carefully lift George to stand up.

George giggles. “Are you serious...? I feel bad now.”

Dream smiles, and leans down to press a kiss to his forehead. “I want to. Promise. So what do you want?”

George makes a face of slight embarrassment, before finally admitting, “Pancakes sound pretty

good.”

“Got it.”

“Do you want help, darling?” George asks.

“No, no, I’ll bring you breakfast.” Dream smiles and pinches George’s cheek gently between his fingers before standing and walking out of the room. He wanders into the kitchen and begins pulling ingredients out of the fridge.

Cooking for George is so routine, he’s hardly noticed time has passed before he’s finished plating the dish. He places it on a tray with a flower and a glass of squeezed apple juice.

The tray rattles as he carries it into their bedroom. He sets the tray on George’s lap, who’s eyes widen the size of saucers.

The stack of lopsided and misshapen pancakes topped with honey, butter, and strawberries reaches his chest. “Wow...thank you, this looks really good.” He says bashfully.

“I’m glad.” Dream smiles.

The blonde sighs and settles beside him as he begins to eat, praising his progressive cooking. He manages to tune it out by mistake, far too focused on the piece of paper in his pocket. It feels as if it’ll tear a hole in his pajama pants, it’s so heavy.

He responds mindlessly to George’s comments as he thinks about what it wrote. *Maybe this is stupid.*

George impales the last strawberry on the tip of his fork, running it through the remaining honey on his plate before popping it into his mouth.

He notices Dream hovering nervously beside him, thumbs twiddling in his lap. “Are you okay?”

Dream nervously clears his throat. “Yeah, yeah, I...um, I have something for you.”

This seems to peak George’s interest. Dream observes the way he tries not to act like he’s intrigued, amused.

“What is it?” He asks casually, setting down his fork.

“I wrote you something.” Dream says simply.

“Did you?” George’s eyebrows point in attention. “Let’s see it then.”

Dream smiles ear to ear, feeling warm. “You have to be nice. I’m...not that good. Trying my best.”

George’s expression softens. “I’ll be nice. Whatever it is, it’s going to be beautiful.”

Dream shrugs. “I don’t know about *beautiful*, but I tried.” He plucks a slightly wrinkled sheet of paper from his pocket, unfolding it with careful hands and handing it to George. He moves the tray out of his lap before he begins to read.

Scrawled in messy handwriting, George begins reading the lines of carefully crafted literacy.

There were so many humans to choose from

And I chose the intelligent killing machine that is you

George looks up from the paper. “Nice.”

“Just keep reading.” Dream rolls his eyes.

To say I fell in love is an understatement

I had been thrown for a loop with no way to untangle myself

Your love was as sharp as the stakes in your bag

But soft as the sheets of your bed

I have found that love isn't as cruel as I thought it was

I discovered maybe some fairytales were based on a bit of truth

But this is not a fairytale

Because this is a better truth than any storybook

And though my fangs can bite and tear

You showed me how to smile with them

And now I am no longer content despite my life

Because now I am happy with my beautiful wife

“What .” George looks up.

“I wanted it to rhyme. Just to clarify, you're the wife.” Dream smiles sheepishly.

“That's the only rhyme in this! You just wanted to call me a woman.” George frowns.

Dream tsks. “Just keep reading.”

You, with your blunt words and sharp weapons

And your unwillingness to relent from redeeming a monster

You taught me to share a life with someone

Rather than taking it for myself

You've painted my darkness with light

Brought the day to my endless night

Love has made me a new man

Thank you for loving me

- Dream

“Clay...” George says, voice choked.

“Are you *crying*? I didn’t mean to upset you, I-”

“*No* , no, this is amazing- *you’re* amazing. No one’s ever given me something so...meaningful.” He hugs the sheet of paper, pressing it against his heart. “It’s so *you* .”

“You’re too soft.” Dream smiles, genuinely taken aback by George’s sincerity. “It’s not *that* good.”

“You’ve never shown me your writing before. I watched you concentrate and work on this for hours...it just means a lot to me. You spent so *long* and it’s so *personal* ...it’s just amazing.”

Dream softens his gaze, putting an arm around George’s shoulder, using his other hand to thumb at George’s cheek and wipe the escaping tear. “I’m glad you like it, George. I just wanted to make it special.” Dream chuckles. “Even if my shitty writing has its limits.”

“It’s perfect.” George rolls onto Dream, resting his head on his chest. “God, I love you so much.”

“I love you too, George.” Dream says, voice creeping up in pitch. He plants a garden of kisses on the top of his lover’s head. “More than anything.”

There were so many humans to choose from.

Every time Dream feels that warmth in his gut, he can’t help but think about how damn *lucky* he is to have this.

It's a full garden of weeds, growing seeds, and blossoming beautiful flowers to choose from and *somehow* he'd found the most perfect blooming beauties on the entire earth. He feels their love grow and thrive deep within his chest with every 'I love you' and each passing day spent in company with the best person in either of their lives.

Dream couldn't be happier that out of *all* the humans to choose from, he chose George.

Fin.

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